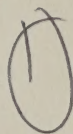




**HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO.**



**TRADE  
REFERENCE  
LIBRARY**



**Please Return To:**

**2 Park Street, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.**







## **HOW TO SELL AT RETAIL**



# HOW TO SELL AT RETAIL

BY

WERRETT WALLACE CHARTERS

DIRECTOR OF THE RESEARCH BUREAU FOR RETAIL TRAINING  
CARNEGIE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, PITTSBURGH



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press* Cambridge



COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

SECOND IMPRESSION, JANUARY, 1923

*The Riverside Press*  
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS  
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO

The executives of the seven Pittsburgh stores, whose practical vision has inspired them to support research in the field of personnel training, this volume is dedicated

BOGGS & BUHL

FRANK & SEDER

THE JOSEPH HORNE COMPANY

THE KAUFMANN STORES, INC.

LEWIN-NEIMAN COMPANY

MEYER JONASSON & COMPANY

THE ROSENBAUM COMPANY





## PREFACE

THERE are two methods of writing textbooks for salespeople. One method is to state the principles of salesmanship and give some illustrations of how they are applied to practical selling difficulties. Another and more interesting method is that of finding out the practical difficulties of salesmen, collecting the practical methods used by expert salespeople in meeting these difficulties, and using the principles to explain the methods.

The second method is the one used in this volume. About sixty difficulties encountered by retail salespeople were listed. Twenty-five people were trained in the methods of interviewing, after which training they had conferences with three hundred expert salespeople who were selected with unusual care from several large department stores. In this way the methods used by from thirty to one hundred and ten experts in handling each difficulty were gathered and organized into the form in which they appear in the text.

The writing of a textbook on salesmanship where this method is used is essentially the work of reporters. The chief of the group of reporters, whose name appears on the title-page, does not claim to be an expert in salesmanship. He has directed the force of reporters who have collected opinions from experts, and his contribution is, therefore, editorial rather than technical. He wishes particularly to acknowledge the very thorough and clever assistance in compilation given by Mrs. Elizabeth Conover Moore, who took most of the material as it came from the interviewers and threw it into systematic form, giving to the work her rich experience in selling, training, and editorial writing. The conception of the plan and the revision of the material

into pedagogical and textbook form were contributed by the writer. The remainder of the compilation and the preparation of the manuscript for publication are the contributions of Mrs. Moore.

Appreciation of more than a formal sort is extended to the salespeople of the coöperating stores, who generously contributed what, in a sense, are the trade secrets by means of which they earn their livelihood. They did this freely, in order that their less able and experienced fellow-workers might benefit by their success.

In addition, acknowledgment of special services is rendered to the following members of the training staffs of the coöperating stores, who interviewed many of the expert salespeople: Alice M. Powers, from Boggs & Buhl; Anne Finney and Olive Kinzie, from Frank & Seder; Margaret Dangler, Margaret Ruf, Kathryn Kerr, Bertha Peik, and Elsie Morton, from the Joseph Horne Co.; Ruth Dredge, Meta Ebeling, Mary Estep, Bess Jamison, Ada K. Lester, Louise Stevenson, J. H. Greene, and C. K. Lyans, from The Kaufmann Stores, Inc.; Margaret Barker, Louise Lafferty, and Maud Linkenhoker, from The Rosenbaum Company. Special mention should also be made of the aid of the following students and assistants in the Research Bureau for Retail Training, who did most of the interviewing: Katherine Canada, Irwin Clorfine, Nina Clover, Hilda Daum, Thelma Gwinn, James Hauser, Laurene Hempstead, Natalie Kneeland, Minnie Landau, Marguerite Loos, Jane Ringo, and Mary Louise Shively. The list of acknowledgments would not be complete without mention of Elizabeth Dyer, who made the job analysis upon which the questions were based, W. R. Skillen, who gave constant assistance in the preparation and organization of the material, and Isadore Whitley, who rendered important assistance in putting the material into its final form.

W. W. C.

*January, 1922.*

# CONTENTS

I. THE SELLING SITUATION	1
II. THE SIZING-UP PROCESS	19
III. WHAT WE NOTICE IN SIZING-UP CUSTOMERS	28
IV. HANDLING CUSTOMERS	45
V. DECISION AND INDECISION	53
VI. THE SILENT CUSTOMER	62
VII. MISCELLANEOUS QUALITIES	72
VIII. FAILURES IN SIZING-UP AND HANDLING CUSTOMERS	83
IX. INTEREST AND COURTESY	90
X. INDIFFERENCE AND DISCOURTESY	100
XI. PATIENCE AND GOOD TEMPER	109
XII. REMEMBERING NAMES AND FACES	117
XIII. HOW TO HANDLE TWO CUSTOMERS AT ONCE	126
XIV. LEARNING TO KNOW MERCHANDISE	142
XV. HOW TO TAKE CARE OF STOCK	157
XVI. LOCATING STOCK QUICKLY	166
XVII. OPENING THE SALE	173
XVIII. DEFINING THE CUSTOMER'S NEEDS BY QUESTIONS	180
XIX. DEFINING THE CUSTOMER'S NEEDS THROUGH SHOWING GOODS	191
XX. GETTING THE CUSTOMER INTERESTED IN THE MER- CHANDISE	197
XXI. DISPLAYING GOODS	207
XXII. HOW MUCH MERCHANDISE TO DISPLAY	230
XXIII. THE SELLING TALK	243
XXIV. WHEN AND HOW TO MENTION PRICE	253
XXV. MEETING OBJECTIONS	261
XXVI. CLOSING THE SALE	290
XXVII. GOOD HUMOR WHEN THE CUSTOMER DOES NOT BUY	305
XXVIII. WHEN THE SALE IS OVER	311





# HOW TO SELL AT RETAIL



## CHAPTER I

### THE SELLING SITUATION

#### SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

**The sale.** The total volume of business of one great department store is made up of twenty-five thousand sales per day, each of which amounts to an average of three dollars, and takes an average of fifteen minutes. The individual transaction which takes place between the time when the customer enters the store and the time when he leaves it becomes the center of the art of retail selling.

Salespeople are not employed primarily to make money for the firm, or even to earn their own living. Their real business is to see that what is done in the few moments during which the customer is before them is done in the manner most satisfactory to the customer. For, if the customer is satisfied with the sale in every way, the firm *will* make money and the salespeople *will* make their living. But if the sale is not carried on in a satisfactory manner, the firm will soon become bankrupt and the salespeople will lose their positions. It is thus apparent that since the life of the salesperson in a store consists of a long series of sales, each one becomes a very important item. Therefore, the best method of studying the art of retail selling is to make a careful analysis of what occurs during a sale.

**The customer.** Not only can we say that each sale is of very great importance, but in addition we can make the statement with conviction that in the sale the customer is of most importance. For the firm's duty is merely to

have on hand material that will suit the customer, while the salesperson's duty is to lay this material before the customer.

The study of a sale is of still greater importance, because of the fact that so many sales are alike, and that when one has been mastered, the others can be more easily handled. Moreover, where there are different items in the sales, it is easier to handle each sale if we know that the differences between sales are not so great as are their likenesses. It must not, however, be assumed that because sales are alike, their differences are not important. The tendency to look upon all sales as alike does a great injury to the art of retail selling, since, as we shall see, the differences in customers and selling situations are marked. To put the idea into other words, the selling situations are fundamentally the same, but they may have superficial differences.

It will therefore be of very great value for us to study the mind of the customer as he enters the store, remains for a few moments, and makes or fails to make his purchase. What is the customer thinking about? For what purpose does he come to the store? How does he make sure that what he gets will be satisfactory? How can the salesperson help him to do these things efficiently? These, and many other questions of a similar sort, when answered carefully, will give all the information that it is possible for us to get concerning the art of retail selling.

## SECTION 2. THE PLACE OF REASON IN SELLING

**The customer's need.** When the customer enters the store, he has one important thing in his mind. He feels a need which he wishes to satisfy. During the time that he is in the store, he is busy trying to find the means of satisfying this need. In fact, the art of retail selling may be defined as the art of helping the customer to define his need, and to select the articles which will satisfy that need.

The same idea can be put in another way by saying



that the customer enters the store with a problem in his mind, and that his purpose there is to find some solution for the problem. For instance, a mother sees that her child's shoes are worn out. She comes to the store with the problem of finding a pair of shoes, with sufficient *durability* and a satisfactory sort of *fit*, that will leave the child in the condition of being properly shod. The business of the salesperson is to help make this problem quite definite, so that the mother may know exactly what sort of shoes she needs; to lay before her the different kinds of shoes; to explain about the shoes and the values of each pair; and while she debates about the pair which will best solve her problem, to help her in her selection and send her away with the conviction that she has arrived at a satisfactory solution.

**Three stages.** The customer's need, or problem, up to the time of the actual purchase, is usually in one of the following three stages of development: (1) sometimes he knows exactly what he wants, or (2) on some occasions his need may as yet be rather hazy and undefined, while (3) on other occasions it may not come into existence at all until after he enters the store. These three cases may be illustrated in the following manner: A man enters the men's furnishings department and states that he wishes to buy a dark blue four-in-hand tie. In this case the problem is very definite. Or, he may feel that he wants to get some kind of tie, but is uncertain as to whether it should be a four-in-hand or a bow tie, and before he can make the purchase it is necessary for him to decide finally which he wants. In the third case, he may have entered the store to buy a pair of shoes, but as he walks through the men's wear department he happens to see some ties and feels that he needs one.

Or, to take another illustration, so that we shall be sure that the point is quite clear. A woman may enter the store knowing that she wants, or that she ought to have, a new hat of a certain kind. Or, she may intend to buy one, but

not be sure of its color or shape, or the price that she wants to pay. Or, to illustrate the third case, she may have no conscious intention of buying a hat, but while in the store she notices some hats, or the salesperson may mention hats, or she may buy a suit which will not harmonize with the hats that she already possesses.

**Following the sale.** It is probable that in seventy-five per cent of the sales that are made, the customer's idea of what she wants is not clearly defined when she enters — although she knows in general that she wants something — but becomes more and more definite as the goods are shown to her. So it is an important part of the duty of the salesperson to follow the customer's mind during the sale. For instance, she may state that she wishes to get some silk to make a waist, but she is uncertain about the color or the quality that she ought to get. Then, as the salesperson shows one piece of silk after another, the customer becomes more certain about the kind of material she wishes to get, so that in the course of a few moments she decides with certainty that she wants pussy-willow taffeta, in French blue. While her idea of what she wants is gradually taking definite form, the expert salesperson watches for signs which will show the line along which the customer is thinking, until finally she, too, knows that the customer wants the French blue pussy-willow taffeta.

What has just been said explains why it is that salespeople find so much trouble with silent customers, for unless the customer will talk, it is difficult to know what she is thinking and to find out exactly what she desires to have.

**Other types.** The art of retail selling is somewhat different from the other types of selling, such as wholesaling, canvassing, or insurance salesmanship, because for the most part the retail customer enters the store with a conscious need already present, and all that the retail salesman has to do is to help him satisfy this need; while in

insurance, for instance, the salesman's big problem is to create the conscious need — to get the prospect convinced that he must buy insurance. Retail selling, therefore, is somewhat easier than are some of the other sorts of selling.

**The customer's standards.** In solving the problem or in satisfying the need, the customer has certain standards which help her to decide which article to purchase. She wants to get the most of a certain *value*<sup>1</sup> for the least amount of money. The five standards by which she most often judges the relative worth of her purchase are (a) durability, (b) comfort, (c) fashion, (d) beauty, (e) quality. As between two articles, other things being equal, she will take the one which will last for the longest time. So, too, she prefers to have comfortably fitting shoes, comfortable clothes, a lamp which will give a comfortable light, comfortable eye-glasses. At the same time, she feels that, other things being equal, she prefers something fashionable rather than something which is out of style. In certain cases she will lean toward conservative fashion, and in others, toward extremes in fashion. She prefers, also, something that is beautiful, even though there may be very great differences of opinion as to what is beautiful. Finally, there is a demand for merchandise that has a good quality of workmanship and of material.

There is a great difference in the amount of stress which different people respectively place upon these standards. Some customers are not greatly interested in durability, while they are very deeply interested in fashion. Some care very little for quality and beauty, but are very much concerned about comfort.

The important thing for the salesperson to remember is that any customer who makes a purchase is being influenced by some of these standards. It therefore becomes a part of the fine art of selling to be able to "size-up" the cus-

<sup>1</sup> *Value*—used in merchandising to mean any characteristic which the customer especially looks for in the goods bought.



tomers and to decide which of these standards is of most importance to him. It will materially aid the sale if the salesman knows that one customer wants something that will wear for a long time rather than something that is beautiful, or that another customer is much more interested in having something that is beautiful than something that is durable.

**To keep up appearances.** In connection with the application of these standards it is important to remember that social standing is a very important standard. It does not apply to the merchandise itself, but it does influence people in what they finally purchase. Indeed, we are told there are cases in which people buy at a certain store because of the prestige it gives them in the neighborhood to have the delivery wagon of that store stop before their door. But aside from these extreme cases, there are many cases in which the customer who finds it necessary to put forth every effort in order to maintain what he thinks is social position, will purchase one sort of goods rather than another because it will increase his prestige, apart from any question of durability, comfort, quality, or price.

### SECTION 3. SATISFYING THE CUSTOMER

**How the customer thinks.** We see that the customer enters the store with a certain problem or need in his mind, and that in the satisfying of his need or the solving of his problem he uses certain standards which have just been mentioned.

Let us now proceed to a consideration of *how* the customer solves this problem. We assume that he knows rather definitely what he wants, or is finding it out by methods which have just been described, and we shall now consider what he does after he knows what he wants.

This can probably be made clear by an illustration of the man who goes into the men's wear department to buy a suit of clothes. This customer knows that he wants a



suit costing about fifty dollars; he prefers to have it in one of the current styles, and on the whole he prefers brown. He asks the salesperson to show him some brown suits. Obviously this man — if he intends to pay as much as fifty dollars — wants a suit that will wear well, that will fit well, that will have good lines, and that will be of good quality. The salesman, after measuring him, brings out a suit and tries on the coat. The customer sees that this coat fits and that it is the proper color, but he is not sure of its durability or of its lines. He asks to have another coat brought to him. He sizes this up in the same way, but decides that he does not like the lines. That coat is discarded and a third and fourth are brought out. He then has before him three or four coats, any one of which might possibly do, and he proceeds to weigh the advantages of each. The color may be satisfactory in each, and the lines may be good. But when he considers the matter of price, he may find that there is an important difference. Then it becomes a question as to whether he ought to pay sixty dollars for one suit or fifty for another. If he happens to be a good judge of cloth, he may be able to settle the matter for himself by deciding which is better value, or he may ask a number of questions of the salesperson which will help him to decide upon the differences in quality. The result of this is that after weighing all the possibilities he selects one or another of the suits. Finally, when this is done, he thinks over the sale and has a feeling of satisfaction if his selection has satisfied him completely. If, however, it has been only partially suitable, his feeling of satisfaction, while present, may not be so strong; but whether strong or weak, this final judgment is of very great importance. Indeed, if the feeling is not strong, or if it is a feeling of dissatisfaction, there is every possibility that he may change his mind and return the goods.

If we analyze this case we find the following steps: The customer first has a need which is probably not very definite

and which he tries to make more definite by thinking about the matter during the sale. When several methods of satisfying his need are presented to him, he studies them very thoughtfully, trying to determine what would happen if he should take one or reject another, until finally he makes his selection. The steps of the sale, then, are five: *first*, the customer tries to get a clear idea of what he wants; *second*, he looks at many articles which might possibly satisfy him; *third*, he studies these in the light of his standards; *fourth*, he selects the one which seems to meet them best; *fifth*, he sizes up his purchase and experiences a feeling of satisfaction or of dissatisfaction.

**Differences in customers.** There is a great difference in the amount of thought that customers give to the solution of this problem of buying. Some are very slow in making up their minds, and others make them up immediately. Some are very careless about making a selection — for them, anything will do; while others are very cautious and want things just right. Many people have regard only for price, and have no ability to judge of quality, so that on general principles they would buy a seventy-five-dollar suit rather than a fifty-dollar suit, even though these be actually equal in value. Sometimes the first suit presented is accepted as satisfactory. On other occasions everything in stock has to be shown before a decision is reached.

But no matter what the kind of customer, he goes through this process of reasoning which has just been described — the same process that is used in all kinds of thinking. Consequently, it is quite clear that in retail selling there is a very large place for clear thinking on the part of the customer, and it is necessary for the salesperson to understand that his large and permanent success rests upon his ability to help the customer think out his problems to a satisfactory conclusion. For while it is possible, and easy, merely to let a customer buy something and pay the money over the counter for it, without intelligent effort

on the salesperson's part, it is not always certain, or even probable, that in such a case the customer feels that he has solved his problem and obtained the best value for his money. The lazy salesperson will close the sale as quickly as possible and "slip over" on the customer anything that he will take. But the expert salesperson aims to make an artistic job of the sale, and send the customer away convinced that he has made a good selection.

**The salesperson's service.** Now, in this mental process on the part of the customer, the expert salesperson has a very definite function. Briefly stated, he does three things: *first*, he shows the goods which he thinks will help the customer to solve his problem; *second*, he explains facts about the goods which are unknown to the customer; and, *third*, he states his own opinion upon the goods where his judgment is requested. For instance, in the case of the man buying the suit, the salesperson will first of all *show him suits*, and try them on so that the customer can see them for himself. Then, when the customer is uncertain about such things as the quality of the goods, the salesperson *explains* why the sixty-dollar suit is better than the fifty-dollar suit in terms of manufacture, raw materials, etc. Finally, when the customer is in doubt about whether the suit fits well, or looks well upon him, the salesperson may be asked to *state his opinion* on the matter.

In this illustration we have examples of the three points at which the untrained or indifferent salesperson may fail to make an artistic job of it. He may *not show* the goods so that the customer can make up his mind, or he may *have no information* about the quality of the goods, or he may *not tell the truth* about the quality. For instance, if the customer tries on a pair of shoes that are somewhat tight, such a salesperson may say, "Well, that leather will stretch to the shape of your foot," while to another customer who, in trying on a shoe of the same leather, says she fears it *will* stretch, he says, "That kind of leather keeps its

shape." The customer may take the shoes, in either case or both, but it is perfectly evident that a poor piece of selling has been done.

Where there is misrepresentation of goods in a reputable retail house, the fault lies with the salespeople rather than with the firm. Twenty-five years ago it was considered legitimate for a retail house to buy merchandise of inferior quality for the purpose of selling it as of superior grade. But such "sharp practice" has virtually disappeared. Reputable houses now are ready to stand behind the quality of the goods they sell. It cannot be asserted that conditions are ideal in this respect, but the whole spirit of modern retail trade is opposed to misrepresentation. Where a firm — as is often the case — is too careless to be sincere in its statements concerning the quality of the goods it sells, the insincerity is usually due not so much to dishonesty as to low ideals.

The salesperson's responsibility in this respect is illustrated when a customer who has just about made up his mind to buy, after considerable time has been spent in the sale, raises questions about the merchandise. Now sometimes such questions, if answered truthfully, will either necessitate showing still more goods not so open to question, or else — if such are not in stock — will make the whole sale "fall through." It is at this point that there is a tendency for the salesperson to answer such questions inaccurately, or so to gloss over the objection that the customer is superficially satisfied. Such misrepresentation, due to mental laziness and dishonesty, is much more serious in some departments than in others, seeming to depend upon the spirit of the people in the department. But it is the most serious fault that has to be combated in developing sincere salesmanship.



#### SECTION 4. THE PLACE OF THE FEELINGS IN SELLING

THE foregoing description of the sale deals only with the *thinking* side of the sale. But since sales are probably influenced more by *feeling* than they are by *thinking*, it is in this respect that the salesperson has his greatest power.

**A pleasant sale.** The most important fact about the relation of feeling to buying is that the most promising state of mind for deciding what to buy is the one in which the customer is feeling at his ease and is free from irritation. If people are bothered, they make hasty decisions. If they are happy, they are likely to be much better satisfied with whatever they decide to do. It is therefore necessary, as will be shown in detail later, for the salesperson to see that the atmosphere which surrounds the sale is pleasant and agreeable, even though the customer may be irritating and difficult to handle. There is no question but that he will be more easily and permanently suited if he makes up his mind under pleasant conditions.

**Confidence.** The most important single power which the salesperson needs to cultivate is that of obtaining the confidence of the customer. If customers are confident that the salesperson is showing them all the goods which will help them to make up their minds about what to select, and confident that the salesperson knows what he is talking about, they will be more ready to accept his statements about the goods. They will be more likely to accept his judgment as to fit, suitability, etc., if he inspires them with confidence. So important is the building-up of confidence that several methods of doing this can be mentioned at this point.

**Six methods.** The confidence of the customer in the salesperson is established by the *good will* of the salesperson. If he speaks to his customer with courtesy and is willing to show his goods, the customer will be more inclined to have confidence in him. This characteristic is also

strengthened if the salesperson shows evidence of *expert knowledge*, as, for instance, when a customer asks a question about the merchandise and receives an answer that appears to be satisfactory. Particularly important in building up confidence is the evidence of *sincerity* on the part of the salesperson. The customer is inclined to feel that a salesperson will "say anything to sell the goods." Consequently, when he gives adverse opinions on some points, the customer feels that he is sincere and so is more likely to accept his recommendations without question. Confidence is also established by the *enthusiasm* of the salesperson for his goods. If he talks interestedly and is full of his subject, the customer unconsciously feels that the goods must be worth while. The *appearance* of the salesperson, also, has a great deal to do with the establishment of confidence. The neater the dress and the better the grooming, the more likely the customers are to have respect for his opinions. Finally, the confidence of the customer in the salesperson is influenced by the *confidence* of the salesperson *in himself*. If he knows his goods and can talk with conviction about them, if he speaks with force and effectiveness, if he looks like a person who has respect for himself and his own opinion, the results are advantageous.

**Why feelings are important.** The feelings of confidence, good will, and courtesy which have just been described have a very important influence upon the sale because of the fact that people make up their minds less on the basis of what they know themselves than on what people in whose judgment they have confidence tell them about the matter in hand. In other words, the average customer who comes into the store is unable to decide for himself even a small fraction of the things he needs to decide in order to make a wise selection. He does not know the quality of goods, cannot state whether they are fashionable or not, whether they possess good or poor quality, are or are not worth the money asked. He has not had the train-

ing to do this and frequently does not have the interest to do it. Consequently he prefers to fall back upon the opinion of some one in whom he has confidence, and the most natural person to whom to turn is the salesperson.

It is quite clear that if such a customer has no confidence in the salesperson, he is entirely at sea, while if he has confidence in his judgment, the salesman can sell him almost anything that seems suitable.

From this it is very evident that the customer's feelings are of great importance in the art of retail selling. This is true even with customers above the average, who know what they want, who are good shoppers, and acquainted with values. Even in such cases, an atmosphere of kindness, good will, confidence, and courtesy has an indirect influence upon them in the selection of their goods. Even cold-blooded buyers, who say they buy on the basis of values alone, are influenced by their state of mind in their selection of goods. If they are irritated, they are dissatisfied with the goods; if they are happy, they are more likely to feel that the goods are satisfactory.

#### SECTION 5. EFFICIENCY IN THE SALE

**Speed and accuracy.** We have shown that the duty of the salesman and the firm is to provide the customer with solutions to his problem, and it now remains for us to explain the importance of the efficient sale. By efficiency we mean both the quality of the satisfaction and the time of the transaction. In other words, it is the duty of the house and the salespeople to satisfy the customer, as *completely* as possible, in as *short a time* as is practicable.

The total transaction with which the customer is concerned involves not simply selecting the goods, but altering them, delivering them, paying for them, and adjusting any difficulties that arise afterwards. Consequently, it is important that the salesperson fill out sale-slip accurately, have the goods wrapped in the proper manner, and deliver

them to the next agency, which carries them to the customer and completes the total transaction. In addition to the *accuracy* of these operations, special attention needs to be paid to the *time* element. If the time for the satisfactory sale of a pair of shoes can be reduced from ten minutes to eight minutes, a threefold advantage will result. The customer will be better satisfied, the firm will earn larger dividends (because the selling force can take care of more people), and the salespeople will be able to earn larger salaries. So from every angle it is borne in upon us that the time element is important.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the chief thing is not to finish the sale in the shortest time possible, but rather to satisfy the customer most completely. But while some customers want to have a great deal of attention paid to them, and like to spend a great deal of time upon the sale, the average customer prefers to have the operation over as soon as possible, with due regard to seeing everything he needs to see.

**Efficiency methods.** In saving time, which will add to the efficiency of the sale, the salesperson is benefited if he can do four things well. In the *first* place, he will save time if he knows the location of his stock so thoroughly that he can go immediately to a particular place and find exactly what he is looking for. In the *second* place, he can save time if he has his merchandise information at his tongue's end, and can at once answer questions which the customer asks. In the *third* place, he can save a great deal of time by speedy action, walking rapidly, taking down goods quickly, and returning them with celerity. In the *fourth* place, the speed of the sale is increased by the business-like, quick speech of the salesperson. If he appears to know his business and is business-like in a courteous way in action and speech, it will speed up the sale and make the customer think more rapidly than he otherwise might.

In all these cases it must be noted again that the impor-



tant thing is *not* speeding up the sale, but rather satisfying the customer completely, and if, by speeding up, the customer becomes irritated or nervous, a grave mistake has been made. On the other hand, however, there is no question but that the speed of sales can be increased by twenty per cent, not only without harming the sale, but actually with improvement of the impression which the store and the salesperson make upon the customer.

#### SECTION 6. THE FUNCTION OF THE FIRM

THUS far we have been considering only the customer and the salesperson, and have not taken into account the duties of the firm with regard to the sale. But this factor is so important that the subject cannot be dismissed without some reference to it.

**A complete stock.** In the *first* place, it is the duty of the firm to see that the lines of stock are so complete, within the limits of its financial ability, that the customer can have all possible solutions to his problem placed before him. That this is not always the case is quite clear from the number of calls made for merchandise which is not in stock, even in very large stores which advertise that they furnish "anything under the sun." The fault is to be found at three points: (1) Sometimes the firm does not take seriously its claims that all lines must be complete. (2) Where the firm does take this seriously, the buyer has frequently no adequate method of knowing how complete his stock is; moreover, many a buyer resents the filling-out of "want slips" sent to the merchandise office, as a reflection upon his buying. (3) But where the firm and the buyer are both anxious to have the stocks complete, the salespeople frequently fail to take note of lines which are not complete.

**A well-located stock.** It is a *second* duty of the firm and of the buyer to see that whatever stock they have is located as efficiently as possible, that it does not change location too frequently, and that fresh stock is brought down from

reserve as far as needed. When this is done, it is then entirely fair to require the sales force to get the stock they need for a particular sale in the briefest possible time. If one could state the facts in terms of figures, it would be safe to say that the time of the sale can be shortened by ten per cent when the location of the stock is worked out in the most systematic form and so taught to the salespeople.

**Training.** In the *third* place, where conditions of service are such that inexperienced people have to be engaged to sell merchandise, it is the duty of the firm to provide training for the salespeople. The art of selling is so intricate, and the mechanics of the department are so difficult to understand, that no inexperienced person can be expected to become expert in a short time. The firm owes it to the public to shorten as much as possible the period of training during which proficiency in the technique of selling is being acquired. To this end, it becomes the particular duty of the buyer to see that his people are trained. This cannot be left entirely to the training division, because they lack knowledge of the five points of selling in many departments. Matters of system, making sale-slips, personal hygiene, etc., can be so taught, but the technique of the sale has to be learned by careful attention to details as they arise. Therefore, there is only one place where such training can be given, and that is upon the selling floor. The duties of the training division in such a case will obviously be to help the buyer in the methods of training his people.

**Summary.** In this chapter the attempt has been made to analyze the sale and to show the simple elements that make it up. From this study it is apparent that what goes on in the mind of the customer during the sale is the center of the whole art of selling. We have seen that he comes into the store with a need to satisfy or a problem to solve. In doing this, he has certain standards which he keeps in mind,

such as the durability of the goods, fashion, quality, and comfort. In applying these standards, he looks at many samples of merchandise, asks many questions about things he does not know, and finally makes a selection.

In this operation the salesman has three things to do: he shows the goods, explains points which the customer does not understand, and gives his judgment upon relative values when it is called for.

Furthermore, the salesperson needs to understand that the feelings are very important factors in the sale. Particularly important are the quiet, pleasant atmosphere and the feeling of confidence in the salesperson on the part of the customer. This confidence can be obtained when the salesperson shows good will and courtesy, expert knowledge, sincerity, enthusiasm for the goods, an effective personal appearance, and confidence in his own ability.

In performing this service, it is necessary that it be carried out in as short a time as possible and to the complete satisfaction of the customer. This can be done if the salesperson knows the location of his stock, has adequate merchandise information, speeds up his movements and speech, and has a business-like manner and expression.

The contribution of the firm is made in three ways: it provides the goods, arranges them in the most effective manner, and trains the people in the art of selling.

Last of all, the duties of the salesperson may briefly be stated as five: he has to define the problem of the customer, present the merchandise which will solve the problem, explain to the customer how it helps to solve this, assist in the selection of the proper article, and when it has been selected, send the customer away with the conviction that the wisest possible choice has been made.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by saying that salespeople are not employed to make money for the firm?
2. In what respects are sales alike?

3. In what respects are sales different?
4. Compare two customers whom you know, showing how they are alike and how different.
5. How is a purchase like solving a problem?
6. Tell a story of the sale which you have recently been concerned with, either as salesperson or as customer, and tell how many solutions were presented and how they were disposed of.
7. In what respects is retail selling in stores different from canvassing or from wholesaling?
8. Name all the standards which customers have in choosing their purchases.
9. How does a salesman inspire confidence?
10. Why are feelings so important in selling?
11. What can be done in some departments you know to speed up the sale?
12. When is the sale speeded up too much?
13. What part does the firm play in the sale?
14. Is it true that salesmen are born and not made? Why?
15. Collect two cases in which a sale was made because the salesperson knew merchandise and could talk it up.
16. Collect two cases where you are sure a sale was lost because the salesperson did not know his stock.
17. Instead of coaxing or forcing a customer to buy, what should be done?
18. Tell a story of a sale when the customer was suited with the first article shown. Should more have been shown if he was satisfied with the first thing he saw?
19. Give an illustration of a customer's entering a store and buying something which he had not thought of buying at that time.



## CHAPTER II

### THE SIZING-UP PROCESS

#### SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

**Why size-up?** Salespeople size-up customers for the purpose of discovering facts which will assist them in giving efficient service.

It was stated in the first chapter that the salesman's chief usefulness lies in his ability to help the customer make the proper decision concerning the goods that are to be bought. This would be a very easy matter if the customer were always able to state exactly what he wanted, and had at the same time enough knowledge about the merchandise to make up his mind as soon as he saw it. But it is not so simple a task as this because, as we have seen, he is often not quite sure of what he wants, nor does he himself have all the information that he needs. So a very important part of the salesperson's work is the discovery of all the facts that will help him to assist the customer.

**Character.** These facts are of two kinds. First are the facts about the customer's characteristics, habits, and prejudices. For instance, some customers are business-like, and want the salesperson to show the goods quickly and say nothing. Other customers are friendly and are put into a better frame of mind in selecting what they want if the salesperson shows a friendly interest. Some customers have very loud tastes and will be interested only in goods of extreme and bizarre fashion, while other customers are not at all interested in fashion, but rather in very conservative goods.

It is perfectly clear, therefore, that if the salesperson

wants to make a quick and satisfactory sale, he will save a good deal of time if he shows extreme styles to a person of extreme tastes, if he is friendly to those who desire friendliness, and business-like with those to whom quick service is the most important thing. If he should show conservative styles to the person who likes extremes, and if he should talk to a person who preferred to have silence, or should say little to another customer who wished to talk about the goods, he would be wasting the time of the store and irritating the customer.

**The sale.** The second kind of information which he can obtain is that concerning the sale itself. By watching the customer he sees either that he prefers this article rather than another, and that, enough goods having been shown, now is the time to give him an opportunity to decide, or that he wishes to have questions concerning the merchandise answered promptly and in full. A person with certain general characteristics may go into the house-furnishings department with one need in mind, and to the glove counter with other needs in mind. So the salesperson who has sized-up the customer's general characteristics will need to handle the two sales differently because the information needed for the sale in one department is different from what is needed in the other.

Sizing-up in these two senses — of studying the characteristics of the customer and of studying the sale as it is being made — is clearly a very important part of the selling process. It is just as important as is the diagnosing of diseases by the physician. In the case of medicine we have been told that the chief characteristic that distinguishes doctors from each other is the ability to diagnose, for medicine has advanced to such a point that when the nature of the disease is known, it is, in the majority of cases, comparatively simple to cure the patient. Similarly, in selling, if we can find out exactly what the customer wants, and what the things are which influence him in the selec-

tion of goods, half the battle is won (in any large store), because it is easy to bring out the goods that will satisfy his needs. And even in the cases where the exact goods are not available, it frequently happens that the expert salesman can show the customer something else to be substituted for the thing which was asked for.

**Differences.** Sizing-up, then, differs in different departments. The sizing-up which is carried on in the ready-to-wear department involves first the finding-out of certain characteristics, such as whether the customer is reserved or friendly, whether he is shy or self-confident, whether he is economical or free in the spending of money — information which would be of use in any department; but in addition, ready-to-wear salespeople must size-up the customer as to coloring, figure, and taste. On the other hand, in furniture some of these facts would be of no importance, while others would be stressed.

## SECTION 2. ADVANTAGES AND DANGERS

**Sizing-up and handling.** Sizing-up the customer is a means to an end. We do not study customers just for the sake of studying them. The *purpose* of the study is to enable us to find out what they want and to assist them in selecting what they ought to have. The *end in view* is to give satisfactory treatment to the customer so that he will get what he wants, feel pleased with us and with the store, and so become a regular patron. As a matter of fact, sizing-up our customer is only half of the process, the second half being a question of what we do with what we have found out. If we size him up as nervous, tired, irritable, or impatient, and let it go at that, we might just as well not have paid any attention to what he is like. *This information which we gain must influence the way in which we handle him.* If in the past we have learned that nervous and tired people are best handled by a quiet and soothing manner, and if we can remember to adopt this attitude,

he will be more likely to buy and be satisfied. Sizing-up is one half of the task and handling is the other half, and both sizing-up and handling are directed toward increasing sales and gaining satisfied customers.

**A game.** Many salespeople make the sizing-up of customers a sort of game. While they size them up primarily for the purpose of helping to make a sale, they incidentally get a great deal of pleasure out of the study. They are interested in observing how different people act, and how they respond to treatment. One saleswoman says that she enjoys seeing what she can do with the irritable customer. She tries out various plans on her, such as being particularly friendly or performing little services for her, and she gets a great deal of amusement and satisfaction out of watching the cross customer drop her temper (rather than lose it) and become more and more pleasant under friendly treatment. It is this possibility of understanding people better that gives a great deal of pleasure and profit to those who sell, for it is a well-known fact that if we study people in a sympathetic way, watching their actions and getting to know them, we find that the world is full of delightful persons whom we should never have appreciated if we had not watched them.

There are millions of people who walk the streets and come into contact with other people whom they never get to know. They see them and listen to what they have to say, but they never look upon them as persons. The cause for this is not far to seek, because it lies in the fact that people are more inclined to think about themselves than they are to notice others. So, those who forget about themselves, and remember that "the noblest study of mankind is man," discover thousands of interesting personalities in the world who are not noticed by the selfish and self-centered.

Sizing-up, then, may become a game — a guessing game. Some salespeople when they see a customer for the first



time form a quick opinion about what he is like, and then are interested in studying him as the sale is being made and in seeing whether or not they have guessed right at the beginning. In this way many salespeople become very confident of their ability to size-up people at the first glance. Sometimes their judgment is right and does not have to be modified, and at other times it has to be modified or changed entirely.

**The dangers.** The chief dangers of this sizing-up process are two. Careless salespeople may make a mistake and say the customer is of one kind when he is of another sort entirely. For instance, they may say, as will be shown later, that the person is fussy and hard to suit, when as a matter of fact he is a careful buyer. Or, they may feel that the customer is snippy and superior, when as a matter of fact he may be merely a silent and reserved person who is not very genial even to his intimate friends. These are, of course, very serious mistakes, because of the effect they have upon the feelings of the salesperson and consequently upon the feelings of the customer. The salesperson becomes unfriendly and the customer senses it. The sale would be much more quickly and happily made if the qualities of the customer had been correctly judged.

The second danger lies in the fact that salespeople are inclined to think that, if a person shows a certain characteristic, it cannot be changed. To revert to the irritable customer once more, they assume that if a man is irritable, he is of "the irritable type" and that nothing can be done about it; whereas, as a matter of fact, deft and careful handling of the customer may cause the irritation to pass away and result in the customer's becoming quite genial. Or, again, the salesperson may feel that a nervous woman is always nervous, when it is easily possible that the nervousness is due to the fact that she has been shopping all day, and all that is necessary to make the nervousness disappear is for the salesperson to handle her properly by

showing goods quietly and paying attention to everything that she seems to want.

### SECTION 3. QUALITIES OF CUSTOMERS

**Qualities not types.** This leads us to the statement that there are no fixed types of customer. We seldom have decided customers who are *always* decided, or undecided customers who *never* know what they want. People are not always irritable, nor are they always shy or silent. It is estimated that only five per cent of our customers are strongly of one or another of these types. It is more correct to say that a person is sometimes tired and sometimes not, sometimes decided and sometimes undecided, silent under some conditions and talkative under others, ill at ease on some occasions and entirely self-confident on others. So, instead of speaking of "types" of customers, we shall discuss qualities in customers, and we should, in doing this, keep in mind the fact that we are not so much classifying customers as we are studying them as they come to each sale, and finding out what qualities are uppermost at that particular time.

That it does not pay to classify people according to types is rather well illustrated by the cases of these three customers, all of whom were called "the friendly type" by one saleswoman.

*Mrs. A.* "She is friendly, knows a good deal about the dress goods she is buying, knows what she wants, and insists upon getting her money's worth."

*Mrs. B.* "She is friendly, too, and pleasant, but scarcely knows organdy from batiste. She is not certain that she wants to buy to-day, and is not at all particular about the cost of what she wishes to get."

*Mrs. C.* "She is friendly, just like the other two, but she talks a great deal, tells you all about her worries, and frets a good deal about the prices."

This illustration makes it clear that when we say that

a person is of the "friendly type," we have not nearly enough information about her to handle the sale. We could handle *Mrs. A* only when we know that she is friendly, *and* that she knows goods; while we could handle *Mrs. B* by knowing that she is friendly, *but* that she does not know very much about goods and is quite undecided in her taste, and does not care about how much money she spends; and *Mrs. C* would call for still other treatment. In other words, it is necessary in order to handle a customer to gather up *many* of the qualities which she possesses and which are of use to us in the sale, rather than to classify her in *one* particular type.

It is for this reason that so many keen salespeople insist that "customers cannot be put into types. Every one is a little different from every other one." They go on to say, "Of course you keep seeing the same qualities in different people, but no one person can be fully characterized with one quality. He is made up of a combination of many qualities."

By adopting such a point of view toward our different customers, we avoid this danger of dropping people into pigeon-holes according to what we call the "type" of customer. These points are very well covered by certain salespeople who make the following statements: "I don't see how you can speak of the silent type when some of the silent ones are just shy, but will prove to be very pleasant if you once draw them out, while other silent ones are so because they feel superior and don't want to bother to talk. If you thought of these two people as of the same type, you would not get very far. They possess other qualities than silence."

"The reason why I hesitate to call any customer a type when I am dealing with her," says another, "is that I can never be quite sure that the way she acts now is the way she always acts. Her crossness just at this moment may not be chronic; it may be due to the fact that she has been

put out of temper for the moment by some incident she saw when coming to our department. If I act toward her as if I thought she were of the 'cross type,' I should make a bad mistake and perhaps lose a sale, whereas if I assume that this crossness is just a passing matter, I may be able to smooth it out, get her into a better temper, and make a good sale."

**Summary.** In this chapter we have tried to show that we size-up customers for the sake of helping them to select the kind of merchandise that will be satisfactory. We find that sizing-up is necessary in order to save time and in order to give complete satisfaction. A good many salespeople obtain a great deal of pleasure from their study of customers because they make it a game. It was noted that it is dangerous to assume too quickly that people are of one kind when they may be of another, and that they cannot be changed by handling. Sizing-up is carried on solely for the purpose of knowing how to handle people when we have found out what they are like. So we are forced to the conclusion that it is not worth while to classify people according to types. We ought rather to study them to find out all the important qualities they show at the time when they are in the department, and on the basis of this information to give them the proper kind of treatment to help them make a satisfactory purchase.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why should salespeople be able to size-up customers?
2. (a) Think of two adults whose qualities are quite different.  
(b) Make a list of ten qualities for each. (c) Check those which you would have to pay attention to in selling something.
3. Give an instance of where a change in the size-up changed the method of handling.
4. Who is the best judge of character you know outside the store?
5. Tell some stories to show that he is a good judge.



6. Find out his system from him.
7. Ask three good salespeople how they size-up the customer.
8. What rules do you have for sizing-up people?
9. Make a sincere analysis of yourself.
10. What mistakes do people fall into in sizing-up? Give three illustrations.

## CHAPTER III

### WHAT WE NOTICE IN SIZING-UP CUSTOMERS

#### SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

**How to learn.** There are just three ways of studying customers. We must *watch* them for all expressions and actions. We must *listen* to everything they say and to the tone and manner in which they express themselves. We must *think* about what we have seen and heard in order to discover what it all means.

Not only is it advisable to watch customers and listen to what they say, but even more can be learned, when one is inexperienced, by watching other salespeople, listening to what they say and trying to adopt their methods. The following illustration by one expert saleswoman is well worth quoting: "*First*, I began by watching the people in my department who seemed to know their business best. One of them, whom I grew to know particularly well, I used to ask, right after customers had gone, why she did certain things. I could see her very respectful and yielding with some, as if she thought a great deal of their opinion, while with others she would almost tell them what they must take. Yet she seemed to get along well with both. She said, of course, that it was because she had learned to tell what kind of people they were and how they liked to be treated. *Second*, I took to watching other salespeople in the department, not only the best, but the poor ones. I used to ask myself, 'Would I handle that woman that way?' or, 'Was that the best way to persuade that man?' *Third*, I tried in my own case to think back through any sale that I lost to see where I had made a mistake, so as to learn better and improve my method the next time. I got so that I looked on every transaction with a customer

as a sort of challenge to me to size him up quickly and treat him right. And, *fourth*, when I went shopping myself I would try to see if the girls waiting on me were handling me right, for I know I have my own peculiarities, too."

**When to size-up.** It appears that the sizing-up of the customer lasts throughout the whole sale. As one saleswoman in ready-to-wear points out, it begins in her department as soon as she gets her eyes on the customer. She says: "I try to take in five things in the customer between the moment when I see her coming in and the moment when the sale starts. I notice *first*, her general appearance; *second*, the kind of clothes she wears; *third*, the way she wears them, and the manner in which she carries herself; *fourth*, whether she is young or old; and, *fifth*, the way she responds to my greeting — and I try to take in all this without staring at all. I just look her over without seeming to do so."

"As the sale progresses," says another woman, "I notice the customer's expression as I talk to her and show her goods. I try to tell whether it indicates satisfaction or dissatisfaction so as to learn whether or not I am showing the right goods. By getting her to talk I learn more. Then I try to say something which will show that I want to please her, and I notice how she takes that. I keep on watching her eyes, her face, and her actions, listening to everything she says, and I guide my conduct by those."

**What to notice.** From our interviews with some two hundred and fifty salespeople, we have learned that these experts notice five main groups of facts about each customer:

(1) *Carriage.* They watch the way she walks, whether sauntering or brisk, whether erect or slouchy, etc.

(2) *Clothes.* They notice whether her clothes are expensive or inexpensive, fashionable or unfashionable, well cared for, well put on, or otherwise.

(3) *Expression.* They notice particularly the lines around the eyes, and the general expression and coloring.

(4) *Conversation.* Of particular importance are both what is said and the manner of saying it. They show whether the person is pleasant or the opposite, intelligent, well-bred, silent, or talkative.

(5) *Actions.* Salespeople notice how the customer handles the goods and how she looks at them.

These points are of so much importance that we shall pay detailed attention to each one.

## SECTION 2. THE CUSTOMER'S WALK

WE size-up the customer's walk in order that we may get certain facts about her character. Our salespeople tell us that there are three qualities which are shown by the walk.

(1) **The decided customer.** We are told that "the customer who carries herself well and walks with energy and self-possession is of a decided nature and knows exactly what she wants." Sometimes this is shown by the customer's "coming in without hesitation, and sitting down in a definite way as if she were going to get what she wants." A man is described as being a "fast walker, without any time to waste. We must get to him quickly and find what he wants. If we do, we will find him easy to please." "Some men have the word 'pep' written all over them when they come in. This indicates decision. They don't waste time and they know what they want."

(2) **The looker.** The people who saunter through the department without seeming to have any particular object in mind are called "lookers." They "just saunter around, putting in time." One saleswoman decides whether the customer is a buyer or looker "by the way she answers a question. If she moves on indifferently, then there is not much use in pressing the matter." But another salesperson says: "I think it is right to suit your manner to the cus-



tomer as far as you can. If she enters hurriedly and seems ready to buy at once, I come up promptly and seem anxious to please her, but if I see her wandering around, I saunter over her way and quietly ask her if she wants something, or enter into conversation with her."

(3) **The nervous customer.** The nervous customer "can't stand still, but walks up and down in front of the counter while she is waiting, or else she does not want to take her turn and asks for attention ahead of others." "Most business or professional people, on the other hand, will stand still in their places, in a straight and upright posture, or, if they walk around at all, it is in an alert and determined way. Such people, while not nervous, want quick action."

Nevertheless, the saleswoman in silks has found that we may be deceived by the customer's walk. "For instance, the person who comes up in the fussiest way may perhaps turn out to want nothing at all. Sometimes the quick, fussy walk may be used just to hurry the salesperson."

The sporting-goods salesman says the way the customer stands means more than the way he walks. "I notice whether the man is erect or slouchy, and this gives me some pointers about his whole character. If he is slouchy, he is probably lacking in decision, while if he is erect and quick in his actions, I proceed to show him goods just as rapidly as I can and talk to him in a business-like manner. But, of course, I may be mistaken in particular cases. Sometimes this rule does not hold; but usually it does."

### SECTION 3. THE CUSTOMER'S CLOTHES

**Dangers.** There is a great difference of opinion about how far it is safe to judge customers by their clothes. It would seem natural to assume that the expensively dressed woman with the Paris hat and the diamond wrist-watch will wish to purchase high-priced merchandise, while the inexpensively dressed woman will be satisfied with cheaper

grades. But it does not always work out in this fashion, if we may believe the most experienced salespeople. Very frequently it is the other way around.

"I don't pay any special attention to their clothes any more," says one saleswoman, "because on so many occasions when I have tried to get a hint in that way I have been fooled." Another salesperson says, "I admit that I instinctively give their clothes the once-over when they come up to me, but I try not to draw any decided conclusions, because we could all give you so many examples of people's not buying the sort of things their clothes would lead you to expect."

**Taste and style.** However, three points seem to be very generally believed. In the *first* place, it seems to be the impression that we can learn from a person's clothes the kind of taste that she has, and the style that she likes. We can tell whether she is well groomed, in quiet, elegant clothing, or is careless in appearance. The clothes may be smart or conservative, the skirt may be long or short. The wearer may prefer fluffy, frilly things, or a trim and tailor-made style. The material in the dress may be strong and serviceable, or flimsy and perishable. It may be made plainly, or adorned with a considerable amount of beading and embroidery.

To notice these things will help the sale, but it is well to remember that the kind of thing the customer wears to-day may not be the kind of thing she wants to buy. Perhaps, for instance, she is tired of tailor-made things and wants a change. Perhaps what she is wearing is the last thing she has left that is fit to put on. Possibly it is a rainy day and she is wearing something old that she has never been able to wear out because she does not like it. Again, she may always wear simple, tailor-made things for shopping, while she prefers quite the opposite when she is dressed up. Consequently we are advised that we must be careful not to judge *too* decidedly by what she has on. Rather, it

should be taken as a starting-point in asking questions and showing goods.

**Price.** In the *second* place, it is not wise to judge of the probable price of the customer's purchase by her clothes. "Sometimes the richest-looking customers will fuss around for half an hour trying to find something cheaper that will save them a quarter of a dollar. It seems to me that if it is something that is going to show, they don't mind putting money into it, but they certainly do skimp on things that don't show or on things they are buying for other people of whom they are not particularly fond."

"I notice that lots of sensible rich people won't spend all their money on clothes. They may buy only moderate-priced things to wear, but when it comes to furnishing their homes, they may insist on having the finest of linen, silver, and china, so in the departments where we sell such things it is n't safe to judge from simple clothes that they are going to buy cheap merchandise. On the other hand, poorly dressed people often spend a great deal of money. Foreigners have taught me not to judge by outer appearance. They frequently come to the department in shabby clothes, with shawls over their heads, and buy fifty or a hundred dollars' worth of goods and think nothing of it." Another salesman tells us, "Do not size up a man in his old working clothes too hastily, for such a man often has a lot of money to spend for his Sunday clothes." And again, "Poorly dressed mothers often come in to buy for their daughters, and for them they are willing to spend a great deal of money."

In general, the clothes are important, but are not the only way of sizing-up the customer. A man of some experience says that he believes "salespeople often fall down in judging a customer too hastily by what he has on. They don't take other things into account, but make up their minds entirely by the clothes, which is a big mistake. I know it is a temptation to judge by the clothes, and I admit

that in most cases it is our *chief* way, but it is by no means our *only* way.

“For myself, I try to go by them only in general. When I take a man’s coat off, I note the grade of material, the cut and style, the maker’s label, and any other points which will suggest something about his taste. Men don’t vary so much in their clothes as women do, and what a man has been wearing will indicate to me whether he runs to extreme or to conservative styles, but at the same time I am keen to notice anything he may say to show that this time he wants something different from what he has had. It would be a mistake for me to stick closely to the first size-up that I get from the points just mentioned.”

**Differences.** *Third*, clothes count for more in some departments than in others. Salespeople in departments selling silks, dress-goods, and ready-to-wear merchandise believe that they gain a good deal by paying attention to the customer’s clothing and that this is a surer guide for them than it may be in other departments.

**Gloves.** Saleswomen say that it is fairly safe to show fine gloves to the well-groomed and smartly dressed woman. One says, “Don’t ask her what she wants; look at what she has on and match that.” They say you should sell her gloves which go with her garments. “If she wears conservative clothes, don’t bring out yellow gloves, while if she is the flashy kind, show the most extreme thing in stock and she will like it. If they are undecided, sell them the kind they ought to have to go with their style of dressing.”

**Sporting goods.** Salespeople in the sporting-goods department believe that in selling their type of merchandise it pays to go by clothing. “The clothes are a pretty good indication of what the customer may spend. There is a lot of difference between the get-up of a fifteen-dollar-a-week clerk and the prosperous doctor or lawyer, and one knows, of course, that the first will want cheap fishing tackle, and the other the best in the house. The person



who wears shabby clothes cannot afford to spend much on his vacation equipment."

On the other hand, those who sell cameras say they can seldom tell from a customer's clothes what he is likely to pay. One salesman says: "We get the artist trade in here, and you know how careless they are about their clothes. Sometimes the poorest-looking person will buy a seventy-five-dollar outfit. You certainly cannot tell by their dress what they want."

**Toilet goods.** The salespeople who sell soaps, perfumes, and powders believe that "we can go a good deal by the customer's clothes in our department. If a customer is dressed simply — but *well*-dressed — we show her good quality, and talk up the essentials as intelligently as we can. The newly rich will want to see a lot of expensive goods and will buy a good deal. The girl with extreme ideas of style will want the most extreme toilet articles, highly colored and highly scented. We show nice but inexpensive goods to customers whose clothes indicate that they have good taste but moderate means. And to a woman who is very poor, and shows it in her clothes, we display our cheapest lines, but we bring out a few of the higher-priced kinds as well, so as not to embarrass her by letting her see we know she cannot afford them."

**Shoes.** In the shoe department the salespeople go somewhat by the kind of shoes which the customer is wearing. There are two different classes, in general: the customer who prefers sensible, comfortable shoes which may not be stylish, but will last a long time and give satisfaction, and the fashionable customer, whose shoes must be the latest, whether or not they are durable and comfortable. Between these, of course, there are others who combine as much comfort as they can get with good lines and smart fabrics.

"I always notice a man's shoes," says one expert salesman. "If he has been wearing a good kind, I show him that kind, even if he looks broke." Others say, "Even very

well-dressed people are not extravagant in their shoes; they want me to show them as inexpensive a kind as they can get and still be fashionable and comfortable."

**House-furnishings.** On the other hand, salespeople in the various departments selling household goods put little faith in what a customer's clothes may indicate. The furniture salesman says, for instance: "We dare not go too much by their clothes. Often a man who does n't take much pride in his personal appearance likes to put good furniture into his home. Just the other day a very shabbily dressed man bought the finest dining-room suite we had on the floor." In departments selling lamps, pictures, and china, clothes are not trusted, for "so much depends on whether the customer is buying for herself or for a gift. We notice that quite poorly dressed people often spend more generously on gifts than the rich do." But in both the lamp and the upholstery departments the opinion is held by the salespeople that those of their customers who are better dressed have better ideas as to design and color, showing good taste and an interest in the artistic side of the merchandise.

**Millinery.** In the millinery department saleswomen state that, while "you would be surprised at the number of women who buy expensive gowns and suits and who are stingy about their hats," still it is wise to show extreme styles in hats to customers who obviously prefer extreme styles in their suits and gowns, and to show conservative hats to those who are quietly dressed.

**Underwear and corsets.** It is hardly possible for the woman who sells lingerie to judge from her customer's outer clothing what sort of underclothing she wants. Indeed, we are told that women who prefer the most severely tailored suits and gowns often indulge their taste for finery in elaborate lingerie, while the customer who wears costly and exquisite outer clothing may buy very plain and uninteresting underwear.

Those who sell corsets say very much the same thing, with this difference — that an inspection of the customer's way of wearing her clothes, and of her figure and carriage, tells the experienced corsetière a good deal about the type of corset to show, though little about the price.

#### SECTION 4. THE CUSTOMER'S EXPRESSION

**Interest in the merchandise.** Two kinds of information can be gained from the customer's expression. The expression of the face often gives us a good idea of the extent of her interest in the merchandise which we are showing. If she is interested, her eyes light up, she looks at you frankly, and keeps her eyes interestedly on the goods or your face. On the other hand, lack of interest is shown when her expression is blank and her eyes dull and vague. We know she is not interested if she looks all around "as if her mind were forty miles away," and lets the article lie where you put it. The wiser salesperson watches the customer's face for all such signs of interest, satisfaction, disappointment, or doubt. This is especially important in the case of the silent customer who cannot be induced to say what she thinks about the merchandise.

We are, however, warned not to interpret the look of dissatisfaction, or the lack of interest, as indicating that anything is wrong with the merchandise. Sometimes it may only mean tiredness, or chronic worry, or the burden of some trouble at home. It may on other occasions mean that the merchandise is all right, but that the customer has not expected to have to pay so much. She may prefer something that costs less, but does not quite like to say so. It takes considerable experience to learn just how to interpret these varying expressions.

**Character.** In addition to showing interest in the merchandise, the customer's expression gives us some indications about her character which will help us to gain her confidence more quickly and to provide her with the kind

of material she wants. Salespeople do not put much confidence in the various advertised plans of reading character by the *shape* of the face, but they do believe in studying its expression. One of them says: "I don't think the actual features mean much, but the curves of the mouth, the wrinkles around the eyes, the lines on the forehead, and — most important of all — the expression of the eyes, mean a great deal to any one who studies human nature." One can tell by these expressions whether the customer is cheerful, or mean and sullen, or frank and candid. It is possible to tell how intelligent a person is and whether he is sincere, wide-awake, or tired. Particularly is it possible to decide whether his disposition is friendly or irritable. And all these facts concerning the customer's disposition help the salesperson to decide how to treat him and so make a better sale.

#### SECTION 5. THE CUSTOMER'S ACTIONS

WE indicated in section 2 of this chapter that the walk and carriage of a person indicate something about her character, and in this section we wish to speak of the actions of the customer during the sale, in order to show how these give us a clue to what she is interested in. In getting a line upon her interest, the customer's expression and actions have to be taken together. When the customer enters the department, it is wise to notice what sort of merchandise *she pauses to look at*, and after she reaches us and begins to look at what is displayed, we ought to notice the kind of goods *her gaze lingers on*. If a choice is offered her, it is well to observe what article *she comes back to*, over and over again, as if drawn to it.

We need to observe whether or not she is interested in the finer stock by seeing whether she *handles* the most exquisite things in a way that indicates that she appreciates their beautiful design and delicate coloring. Does she appear to be used to such things, or does she handle them



as though she failed to appreciate them? It is important to observe what particular points she *looks for*, such as material, design, cut, workmanship, reënforcing, finish, or price. Does she *spend a good deal of time* over the finer kinds, or *thrust them aside* and *begin to examine the cheaper* or "flashy" things?

When she tries on a garment, it is important to notice whether she *looks at* or dwells upon such points as style, fit, fabric, or price. Are her *actions vain*, or is she unconscious of her looks? Does she *ask questions* as if she were very careful and critical?

In short, much can be gained by noticing where the gaze lingers, how the material is handled, how often particular articles are returned to, and the points that are most closely examined. This will throw a great deal of light on the customer's interest in the goods.

## SECTION 6. THE CUSTOMER'S CONVERSATION

FROM the conversation, more than from any other source, salespeople can size-up the customer's character, as well as her knowledge of the merchandise and her interest in it. Both the *language* and the *tone of voice* should be observed.

**Character.** A pleasant disposition, or its reverse, is likely to reveal itself almost at once in both the words and the tone of voice used by the customer. "Just the tone of her voice goes far toward showing us whether she is going to be nice or disagreeable. The grouches give themselves away almost the first word they say; so do the kickers and fault-finders."

**Refinement and taste.** The customer's conversation may be taken also as an indication of her intelligence, refinement, and taste. "I think the tone of a woman's voice tells you as much about her as her words do." "If she uses good grammar and talks quietly, I try to remember not to use the same kind of language with her that might

go with some one less refined. You can't say 'classy' and 'swell' to people with that kind of voice, and you can't be jolly and friendly with them, either. You have to be sort of distant and polite, just as they are." "I always show the nicest things we have to a woman with a low, pleasant voice, and good manners. I like to wait on a well-educated lady, even if she is n't rich." We see that, usually, a quiet, well-modulated tone and well-chosen language stand for refinement, indicating that the customer should be shown the better grade of goods.

But it is important to examine a little further this prevalent assumption that good English and a cultivated tone imply always the possession of good taste. It must be very definitely stated that there are thousands of people who have faultless taste with regard to the color, design, workmanship, or suitability of an article, who do not use good English, and whose tone is not cultivated. There are many customers who are entirely careless about their language, but extremely fastidious in their choice of clothes or in the furnishing and decoration of their homes. There are others, too, who, though not careless, have moved in circles where correct English is not considered an essential, or their early surroundings have been such that they have formed habits of speech which are not easy to break.

On the other hand, it is equally true that many persons who use irreproachable English are not interested in matters of taste, either because they do not possess good taste or because they think it unimportant.

Bearing these exceptions in mind, however, it is a fairly safe rule to follow that good taste in speech implies good taste in material things.

**Sincerity.** It seems to be generally felt that the customer "who raves over everything" is likely to be unsatisfactory. "I don't trust the woman who gushes over everything I show her, for often she does n't mean to buy. She may just be trying to make you feel good. People who

are really going to buy are more likely to show by their talk that they like one thing better than another. In fact, I am always more hopeful of making a sale when the customer talks unfavorably about some of the things I show, because it suggests that she is actually trying to make choice." And another says: "People who are 'just crazy' over everything yield to passing fancy, and it is often just a waste of time to show them much because they are not likely to buy in the end." But the principle suggested by these quotations should not be considered invariably correct; for, while gushing *may* indicate that the person will not purchase, or will send the article back, yet to gush may, on the other hand, be the nature of the customer, and she may seriously want to buy the article in question. Expert salespeople believe that it is best to assume that enthusiasm does not mean anything one way or the other, and thus they do not let it affect their patience and interest in the sale.

**Knowledge of goods.** A linen salesman says: "I notice particularly how my customers talk, because I can tell in that way how much they know about linens, and so I can tell better how to talk to them myself." Similarly, the extent of the customer's interest in the goods being shown may be gathered from her expressions of approval or of dissatisfaction, from the questions she asks, and from her general remarks.

Because the conversation is so valuable a factor in sizing-up customers, it is evidently essential to lead them to talk. The more skillfully we do this, the more help we gain in three directions: (1) the conversation suggests their personal characteristics, as has been explained; (2) it reveals other personal things about them, such as their recreations, the organizations they belong to, and other outside interests which will act as "leads" by which the salesman may guide his selling talk into congenial channels and put them into the pleasant frame of mind which helps toward

the sale; (3) it shows what they prefer as between the various articles being shown, and guides the salesperson in bringing out the wanted merchandise. Even if criticisms are made about the article displayed, the salesman is able to show other merchandise which cannot be subjected to the same criticisms, and thereby leads on, step by step, to the selection of the exact merchandise preferred.

### SECTION 7. MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

THERE are a few other characteristics noticed by salespeople which may be discussed very briefly. The foreign customer presents a problem, and salespeople must therefore be quick to find out whether he understands English sufficiently well. This will be taken up more fully at a later point.

It is important to note the age of the customer, whether young, middle-aged, or old. If middle-aged or old, it is important to discover whether he is willing to buy clothes suited to his age, or whether he prefers to dress younger than his years. Elderly people may usually be counted upon to be more conservative and simple in their tastes than young people. While this is not always true, the point is worth watching. On the other hand, young girls often desire to dress so that they may look older than their years, and this can be deduced from their clothes and their conversation. "Age is often misleading. You have to find out how old they *want* to look."

The physical characteristics of customers are of very great importance in all departments which have to do with clothing. Salespeople in the women's ready-to-wear department quickly size-up the customer as to figure, carriage, and coloring. While this is not so important with men, the salespeople in men's clothing observe the figure, and in men's furnishings take account of the color, style, and cut of the clothes which the customer wears when he comes to purchase.



**Summary.** In sizing-up customers it is necessary to watch them closely, listen to what they say, and study them carefully. This takes place both at the time the customer approaches the counter and throughout the whole sale. Experts find they can determine from the customer's *walk* whether they are decided or undecided, nervous or placid, "lookers" or buyers. From their *clothes*, their taste and their preference as regards style can be discovered; however, little can be judged concerning the price that they will pay for the goods they purchase. From the *expression* it is possible to judge of the interest they show in the goods, and particularly is it possible to size-up the character, especially as to whether they are pleasant or disagreeable. From their *actions*, as they study the goods, it is important to note what they look at most closely, and what they look at longest and return to most frequently. More than any of the foregoing, the *conversation* indicates both character and preference in the goods which are being shown. Customers reveal through their speech the amount of their refinement and taste, the pleasantness of their dispositions, and the quality of their intelligence, as well as their preferences with reference to the goods, and their knowledge of merchandise.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What are the best rules to follow in learning to size-up people?
2. What should be noticed in sizing-up?
3. What can be noticed about the walk?
4. What can you tell from the walk? Give cases.
5. Is the walk always a sure sign? Give cases.
6. Is the walk of any use in your department? Explain.
7. What can you tell about people from their clothes?
8. What mistakes may be made in judging from clothes?
9. Is a clothes size-up of any use in your department? Explain.
10. What can you tell about people from their expressions?
11. What do you judge from people's actions?
12. Is an action size-up of any use in your department? Explain.

13. What does a person's conversation reveal to you? Give cases.
14. Think of two women and size up their actions, expression, clothes, walk, and conversation.
15. What sort of people are they as judged by each of these?
16. How would you have to handle them in a sale?
17. Do the same as directed in 14, 15, and 16 for two men.
18. What are the chief things you notice about customers?

## CHAPTER IV

### HANDLING CUSTOMERS

#### SECTION I. SIZING-UP CUSTOMERS

**Review.** We have seen that people are neither "all alike" nor "absolutely different." What is true is that customers display characteristics which are met over and over again in different individuals, but no two show exactly the same combination of qualities. They are all different combinations of the same qualities. It is in this sense that customers are somewhat alike and somewhat different.

We learn to recognize these different qualities by using our eyes, ears, and common sense. We observe the actions, expressions, clothes, walk, and conversation of the customers, and from them we can draw rather definite conclusions about their dispositions and their tastes.

We make these observations as soon as we see them entering the department, and continue the study during the sale. Even after the customer is gone, we think back over what has happened, to see how we might have acted more wisely.

The object of all this sizing-up is to help us to understand customers in order that we may assist them to make the best possible selection of goods.

We cannot classify customers according to type to any advantage, and say that they are friendly, or decided, or undecided. Each customer has a number of qualities which we ought to note. For instance, a customer who is called friendly may be also a very close buyer, who does not care for suitability or durability, but is much interested in style, and has only average taste. In the case of this customer it is quite clear that when we say she is friendly, we have not nearly enough information about her to make a good

sale. Consequently, the idea in sizing-up is to pick out not only one quality which might classify her as a type, but all the qualities which are of use to us in deciding how to handle her.

## SECTION 2. HANDLING CUSTOMERS

**One line for everybody.** There are many salespeople who never notice any differences in customers. They use the same line of conversation to all. If they are feeling friendly themselves, they are friendly to the customer. "If the purchaser is talkative, they talk; while, if he is silent, they carry on a conversation just the same." The nervous, the good-humored, the irritable, the reserved, are all the same to them!

Salespeople who use the same talk with all customers are sometimes successful. But this is the case because the natural method of selling which they have picked up for themselves happens to be a general service method. It works on all occasions fairly well, like well-advertised patent medicines which are "good for man and beast." But it is not wise to follow such tactics; for in most cases salespeople do not naturally fall into a fortunate line of selling talk. Most of them have to work with a great deal of care and effort. And in most cases where they never develop it, they never meet with any degree of success. The good salesman with a general utility talk, the same for everybody, and who "gets by" with it, is merely lucky.

That there really must be a difference in the way of handling customers can be made quite clear by two illustrations of how to handle a tired, nervous woman, and an aristocratic old lady. First we shall quote from a saleswoman in the infants' wear department a description of how she handles the tired, nervous woman.

**The tired customer.** "As the customer enters the department, she appears hurried. Perhaps this is real hurry,



or it may be just a sign of her nervous disposition. She drags a small child by the hand, and as she comes nearer we notice that with all her hurry she walks wearily. Our first impression of her clothes is that she is careless, but we should not jump too quickly to conclusions, because she may want to dress neatly and prettily and yet be too poor or too tired or too busy to do so. Her face looks drawn and lined, although she is quite young. The little boy is crying, and yet, in spite of her nervousness, she speaks sweetly to him.

"As she approaches our counter, she looks around the department vaguely. Perhaps she is not sure what she has come for. Then she remembers that she wanted some new rompers, which she notices in the pile. Over she goes to them, and we meet her. By this time it is evident that she is tired and nervous, probably excitable by nature, not very well off, fond of her children, and seeming to spend more money on their clothes than on her own.

"If she is handled unwisely, she will get more excited, become still more tired, and perhaps go off in tears. Shopping is rather hard with a baby to drag around, but she has no one to leave him with at home.

"So, with this customer we must be patient, friendly, interested, and above all, calm. Perhaps we can so handle the sale that she will not only get what she wants, but will go off feeling better than when she came in. So, though we don't feel extra good ourselves this morning, let us see how nice we can be to her. We get out lots of rompers, being careful to find the little boy's size, or perhaps we have her take a seat while we hunt for the right size and color and bring her anything we find. We lift the little boy up to sit on the counter, which tickles him and keeps him out of mother's way, or we may suggest that she send him up to the play-room and leave him in safe hands while she does the rest of her shopping. This would be a good way to handle the tired, nervous customer."

Now, let us contrast with this the way we shall treat the aristocratic old lady.

**The aristocrat.** "The tired mother is gone, after spending a little more than she meant to, but greatly cheered and even rested by the treatment she has received. As she leaves, another woman comes in, quite elderly and *very* dignified. She might almost be called pompous, from her manner. Her clothes are quiet and extremely elegant, and she has doubtless just stepped out of her limousine, with a smartly liveried chauffeur at the wheel. She moves slowly, looking at the display as she passes, but if her eyes meet the salesperson's, she really does n't see her at all. Salespeople scarcely exist, except as necessary store fittings, like tubes or delivery wagons. As she rustles over closer, we step out and bring her a chair. She does n't condescend to thank us for it — it is simply one of the routine things that are always done for her. Meanwhile, we have sized-up her clothes, bearing, age, and social position. So, as we seat her, we ask in our most deferential tone, 'What may I show you, madam?' — and our tones from then on are dignified and formal, yet interested, and *never* friendly or presuming. It soon develops that she is going to buy a layette for a new grandchild, and not the thirty-five-dollar kind, either. Still, we don't want to talk up the hundred-dollar set to begin with, for she may be either very stingy, or else, for all her money, she may be under her husband's thumb when it comes to spending it. We show her plenty of goods, don't talk much, and ask few questions. We let her order us around; she likes it and it does n't hurt us.

"We watch her as we show the seventy-five-dollar layette, which it seems safe to begin with. Is she satisfied, or dissatisfied? How does she look at it, and what does she say? Is her objection to the price, so that we had better show her something which costs less, or does she find fault with the quality or the number of articles, so that we

may safely bring out the hundred-dollar set, or does she by this time seem to be the kind that certainly does n't wish to pay over seventy-five dollars, yet wants a layette which looks like a lot more than this one does?

"So we go on sizing her up and treating her as proud old ladies with more money than kindness like to be treated, and finally she goes out, pleased with her order."

These two illustrations make clearer than many words could do the fact that different people may need to be treated in different ways, that the salesperson has to study his customers all the time, and that the more skillful he is in noticing their qualities, the more successful will be his salesmanship. For, while "the Colonel's Lady an' Judy O'Grady *are* sisters under their skins," they are accustomed to vastly different kinds of treatment.

**Adaptation.** In this connection it may be said that various salespeople, from their experience, lay a great deal of stress upon adaptation. The salesman must adapt his method to his customer. "Customers," says one salesperson, "have very different dispositions, and at first you cannot exactly tell what they are going to like, so I always *begin* with them all in the same way. But from that first moment on, I try to make my manner suit theirs. I think that unless you are very clever at sizing people up from their appearance right off, it is safer to go up to all in a pleasant way, with some question in a willing tone that is polite and not too friendly. Then your manner will depend upon theirs from that point on."

A store executive says: "Each person must be treated differently, but with always the same object in view. You must impress every customer with the store's willingness to serve her. Giving this impression requires a different manner for different sorts of people." "We have many customers here who might be called difficult. They are cross, critical, silent, nervous, or unreasonable, and each requires a certain type of treatment. This treatment con-

sists mostly of patience, self-control, and pleasant friendliness. I have noticed that when you treat difficult people in this manner, they are apt to begin to treat you in the same manner before the sale ends. What you give the customer, you get back. If you are nice enough yourself, your customers will mostly be nice too."

**Not the Golden Rule.** We should not apply the Golden Rule literally to customers. It tells us that we must do unto others as we would have others do unto us. But the salesman must never take it for granted that the customer wants to be treated as the salesman would like to be treated if he were in the customer's place. People are very different in their likes and dislikes, and what satisfies the salesperson may not be satisfactory to the customer. This is very clearly brought out by the saleswoman who says: "Why, there are lots of waists in this department that I could n't or would n't wear myself. But is that any reason why I should not show them and recommend them to a woman who can wear them? The kind I like would not appeal at all to that woman. So I simply try to find out what my customer's likes are and try to please her. In the same way, I try to discover how she wants to be treated and adapt myself to her tastes. When I go shopping I happen to prefer business-like treatment, but if, as a saleswoman, I find a customer who prefers jolly, friendly treatment on the part of salespeople, I do my best to please her. I always let them have what they like."

This case illustrates the fact that the salesperson should not take the customer for granted, either with regard to the merchandise he likes, or with regard to the manner he prefers to have used toward him. Similarly, it is a serious error for the salesperson to assume that his taste would be a matter of importance to certain customers. There is perhaps no more thoughtless mistake made by salespeople than to say, "I wear that kind myself." This is particularly true when the salesperson who says it shows



all the evidences of being a person who lacks good taste or a discriminating judgment in his own appearance.

So, if we apply the Golden Rule at all, we must do so in its very deep sense. That is to say, since we like to receive from other people the treatment we prefer, we should give our customers the treatment they prefer, and this will not necessarily be the treatment or the merchandise which we ourselves like.

In conclusion, and to emphasize this very important point, let us borrow an illustration from another of the arts. When a decorator has an object of unusual beauty, or value, upon which he wishes to focus the attention of people who enter the room, he is careful to select a background that will blend with this vase, or tapestry, or picture, and yet one that will throw it into relief, making it look as though it *belonged* and felt at home in its place, and not as though it were the object of most importance in the room. The background, or atmosphere of the room, *must harmonize* with the central object, yet must make it stand out from the less important things. So, in the sale, the customer is the central figure around whom our actions revolve, and the atmosphere most favorable to a satisfactory sale is the atmosphere in which the customer feels at ease, the atmosphere with which she is in harmony, and still the one which makes her the center of attention.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why do you need to handle customers differently? Give cases.
2. What are the best ways for salespeople to handle you yourself? Why?
3. What are the best ways for salespeople to handle your chum? Why?
4. So also for one of your parents? Why?
5. In what sense should we not follow the Golden Rule?
6. In what sense should we follow it?
7. What are your chief rules in handling different customers in your department?

8. Tell stories which contrast the ways of handling two different customers.
9. What is the best case you have ever seen of successfully handling a difficult customer?
10. Give three illustrations of where a sale failed because you failed to handle the customer properly. How might you have improved it?
11. Keep a list of three of your hardest sales during the day and after each of the customers has gone, think over the sale and see where you could have improved it.

## CHAPTER V

### DECISION AND INDECISION

#### SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

IN sizing-up customers salespeople note some qualities which make the sale hard, and some which make it easy. We find, therefore, as would be expected, that their classification of customers is quite different from that which might be made by people following other vocations. Several characteristics thus noted will be discussed somewhat more in detail in the next few chapters.

Conspicuous among the group are the qualities of decision and indecision. The first of these is of importance because decision usually leads a customer to have strong opinions, while the second is called to our attention because we find difficulty in leading him to make up his mind. Silent customers are very hard to handle because the salesperson is unable to know what they are actually thinking. The "looker" presents a problem because it is difficult to know how much assistance to give without giving too much. Other qualities that bring themselves to the attention of the salespeople because they need special attention are: friendliness, good-breeding, expertness in buying, stinginess, bargain-hunting, vanity, and faddishness.

The chapters which follow will present some description of ways by which these qualities can be recognized, together with a statement of the methods by which they have been handled.

#### SECTION 2. THE DECIDED CUSTOMER

**Characteristics.** A decided customer is supposed to make up his mind quickly and to stand by his opinions strongly. He is determined to get some one thing, and is satisfied

when he gets it. It is difficult to change him, though frequently he is quite willing to be convinced. He acts rapidly when goods are put before him and makes his decisions in a short time.

**Varieties.** Having in mind such a person, there are four general situations arising: (1) The decided customer may enter knowing exactly what he wants, and will ask for it. In certain departments, as in notions, this customer is the most usual kind. The woman who goes there knows exactly what she needs, and says: "I want a paper of oval-eyed needles, 5-10, a card of black snap fasteners, size 3, and two yards of black featherboning." In the book department she comes in for "Lorna Doone," and for that only, while in the picture department she wants a framed carbon copy of the "Baby Stuart," and says so. There is less decision shown in departments selling either ready-to-wear or merchandise which may be used as gifts. (2) The decided customer may know that he wants something in the department and will make up his mind quickly as soon as he sees the selection, but *at present* he is undecided. For example, a woman needs a new vestee for her suit and is willing to spend two or three dollars, but does not know what kind or shape she will decide upon until she sees what there is. Once she has been shown everything, she quickly makes up her mind. (3) The customer may go into the department without any special thing in mind, but if he happens on something that he thinks will suit him, he makes up his mind to buy, the instant he sees it. Finally, (4) he may know what he wants, but may want the wrong thing, in which case it becomes the duty of the salesperson to see if his mind can be changed, and in many cases this can be done.

**How recognized.** Decidedness in the customer may be recognized, we are told, by the customer's walk, clothes, and conversation. Salespeople believe that the firm, determined gait, the direct approach to the counter and to



the salesperson without loitering, is indicative of the self-confident, decided nature. In the matter of clothes the signs are not quite so clear, but in general, neat clothes and a well-groomed appearance are supposed to be the signs of decision.

Immediately upon the customer's beginning to talk, we can detect a number of signs. She may begin by telling us just what she wants, and in a *positive tone*. She is usually perfectly pleasant about it, but she wants *what* she wants *when* she wants it, and everything she says and does lets us know how decided she is. "She *reels off* the color, size, and style she needs, without waiting for any questions." Such a customer reveals her decision by the fact that she usually *knows the merchandise* well. The reason why she is decided may be that she feels perfectly sure of herself, and this is, of course, revealed to the salesperson as the conversation progresses. As one salesperson says: "It is knowledge of merchandise that chiefly makes the decided customer, in my mind. She knows exactly what she wants and why she wants it. She is *seldom* to be influenced and *never* to be fooled."

This does not mean, however, that the decided customers are hard to suit. "They are the nicest people to wait upon," says a woman with long experience. "They know what they want and can describe it so well that you can get it right away. If you have it, the sale is made. If you do not have it, and have to offer something else, you feel that you still have a chance of convincing them that it will do as well, because they usually know the goods so well that you can talk to them straight."

Decided customers are appreciated by many salespeople, because "they waste our time less than others do, since they tell us in a few words just what they want and make up their minds quickly when they see it."

Some of the salespeople interviewed stated that the decided customer is usually so set in her ways that it does

not do at all to make suggestions or to show anything that she has not asked for, but such opinions are in the minority so far as good salespeople are concerned. Many reports state that they can be influenced if we have the goods and the arguments.

SECTION 3. HOW TO HANDLE THE DECIDED CUSTOMER  
THERE are four situations which call for different methods of handling.

*First.* "If we have what she asks for, I get it out, not saying very much nor asking many questions. I let her do the talking. Whether she knows the merchandise or not, I let her think that I think she does. Sometimes I find it well, if she seems to be vain, to defer to her and even to flatter her. If she makes wrong statements I let them go and don't correct them, but I try to be very careful myself in the answers I give to her questions."

*Second,* if the salesperson does not have what the customer wants, a number of methods are used. (1) "If you don't have what she asks for," says one salesperson, "get out the *nearest thing to it* and compare it with the others around to show how desirable it is. Emphasize all its good points. If you talk honestly and intelligently, you can nearly always persuade even the decided customer to take what you have." (2) "If I don't have the goods, I try to *avoid the appearance of dictating* or of saying outright, 'Here is something just as good.' When I bring out the articles we have, I am careful to explain that since I cannot give her exactly what she wants, I offer these merely as suggestions, in the hope that she may like one of them nearly as well." (3) The saleswoman in the white goods department says, "If I have n't the length of material on hand she wants, I *show her a piece larger — never smaller.*" (4) "As soon as I size-up the customer as being of the decided kind, I try to *get along without asking many questions*, because I find that she will tell me everything I need to

know, usually without being asked, if I give her a chance.”

*Third*, if the decided customer is bent upon buying the wrong thing, it is quite clear that the salesperson is in a bad fix. It will not do for the customer to take home something which it is certain she will not like when she gets there, but at the same time she is rather sure of her wants. Of course, there is not so much danger of her being dissatisfied afterward, because, once her mind is made up, she is not so likely to change it; and yet, on the other hand, there is enough danger of this to make the salesperson feel some responsibility in the matter. The majority of salespeople advise the using of tactful methods of persuasion. As one says, “I always try not to influence the decided customer if we have what she wants and if I think it is what she ought to have, but I do feel it my duty to speak up if what she wants is the wrong thing, if it is very unbecoming or not the right size or color, or not suitable for her purpose. If she is sorry she bought it, she won’t remember she insisted upon having it. She will blame the store and me. So I always try to show her pleasantly and tactfully why something else would answer the purpose better.” In a ready-to-wear department one saleswoman reports: “If you see that a customer has set her heart on something that will not suit her, you must use tact. Show her how and where it is wrong, but you have to be careful of your manner. You must also remember that many are so set that you can’t budge them.”

*Fourth*, when the decided customer is a looker, and passing around the department examining the articles of merchandise, she is likely to say that if she sees anything she wants she will let you know and that she wants to look for herself, because she knows what she wants better than she can tell any one else. In that case, she can be left alone until she has made up her mind about what she wants, while the salesperson in the neighborhood keeps her eyes open for any evidence of her wanting attention.

## SECTION 4. INDECISION

THE undecided customer usually has two characteristics: she is not sure about what she wants, and she rather easily changes her mind. Such a customer is a very great burden to the salespeople because of the fact that she is likely to waste a great deal of time, to be difficult to talk to, and to be dissatisfied after she has made her purchase. There are four varieties of the species.

The *first* and most interesting variety is the customer who has a fairly decided mind, but is as yet undecided, and will make up her mind as soon as she has seen enough material.

The second type think they want *something*, but do not know what. This is a very vague buying attitude and one of the most difficult. Even with the salesperson's judgment to help, they cannot decide.

Then there is the *third* type who know in a general way what they want, but when all the goods are before them, they cannot make up their minds as to which they ought to have.

*Finally*, there is the woman who makes up her mind and then changes it. This is the sort of woman whom it is hard to pin down to a real purchase, because as frequently as not she sends back the goods after she has taken them home.

It is quite clear, of course, that the undecided customer is much more difficult to handle than the decided kind, and therefore requires greater tact and selling ability.

**How recognized.** Indecision can be recognized by the expression of the person's face, by her actions, and by her conversation. It is difficult to describe what the expression is that indicates lack of decision, because it depends upon so many factors. But usually the indecisive person has a loose sort of face in which the lines sag, the gaze is not likely to be direct, and, in general, the face is not business-like. In actions she is inclined to glance first at one thing,



then another, and to let her hands wander around a good deal over the goods. When she talks she is indefinite and hesitating in replying to your questions, noncommittal in expressing her preferences, or may express preferences for too many things, but does not appear to have any particular idea as to the color, material, or style she wants.

If she does get around to a point where she wants to buy, she relies a great deal upon the salesperson's opinion and sometimes even hands over the whole decision to her. "I want a dressy waist to go with my new suit. Show me something you think will do." "I just want a pair of low shoes. I don't know what. Give me what you think is right." "I can't decide which is most becoming. What do *you* think?"

#### SECTION 5. HOW TO HANDLE THE UNDECIDED CUSTOMER

FOR handling the undecided customer there are four methods described by our salespeople.

*First*, all of them agree that in any case the best way to meet indecisiveness is to show a great deal of merchandise and usually to talk a great deal about it. "Make plenty of suggestions about styles, showing a good many and telling what *you* think about each."

*Second*, patience is required. "You have to make up your mind to give the undecided customer more time than others need." For instance, "Sometimes we have a customer who just says she wants a 'fur piece,' but does n't know what. I bring out several different kinds at once, good pieces of different shapes and prices and in several kinds of fur. I get her to try them on. I listen to her comments, watch how she reacts to the looks and price of each, and note which is most becoming to her in color, line, and cut. Then I bring out more pieces, like whatever seems most promising, and put away the ones we did n't like.

I find it well to talk a good deal, or she will start to wander around and get away from me without buying."

*Third*, it is often necessary to make up her mind for her. In doing this we have first to find out what she really wants. "I start by asking her a general question, such as, 'Coat or wrap?' so as to get an idea of what she wants, but sometimes she is so undecided she does n't even know that. I show several of both kinds and try to draw out some statement about which she prefers, then show more of whichever she seems to like. Sometimes she won't answer, or her answer may be so hesitating that I don't pay any attention to it, since it is evident that she does n't care much one way or the other."

Other salespeople say: "Show her what you think is best for her to have, and convince her that you are right. Let her know you understand your merchandise and can be trusted to give advice and help in the final choice." Still others do not try to make up her mind for her, but talk up the good points of what she is looking at. "I just try to tell her the good points. I say, perhaps, that both of the articles are all right, but perhaps this one would be better for her purpose. Then I give the reasons."

It is usually unwise to try to force even the undecided customer too much, as it may lead to the return of the goods, and general dissatisfaction.

*Fourth*. One very capable salesperson who handles this type of customer successfully believes in making her settle on one thing at a time, as the following report indicates: "When one of these changeable customers comes to me for a number of garments — skirt, coat and waist, for instance — I find it well to make her settle each thing then and there as we decide on it. I call the fitter the instant she decides, and put one sale through before going on to anything else, for if she is allowed to wander around from one thing to another without deciding anything, she is quite likely to change her mind over and over again

and end by not taking one half of what she said she would."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Is a decided person always decided? Explain.
2. What different sorts of decided customers have we?
3. Describe two decided people who have many other qualities in which they differ or are alike.
4. What are your signs of a decided customer?
5. Analyze yourself with regard to decision and indecision.
6. How should a decided customer be handled?
7. Give cases. Have you added any methods to those discussed in the chapter? Explain.
8. Give cases showing decided customers who have been made to change their minds and correct mistakes.
9. What are the various kinds of indecision? Give cases.
10. How do you recognize each of these varieties?
11. How do you handle them? or how have you seen them handled? Give cases.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SILENT CUSTOMER — THE LOOKER — THE FOREIGNER

#### SECTION 1. HOW TO SIZE-UP THE SILENT CUSTOMER

OF all the customers who enter the store, the most baffling is the silent customer. This is true because she presents three difficulties. In the first place, you cannot easily find out exactly what she wants; in the second place, you cannot tell which of several things she likes; and, particularly, in the third place, you cannot find out what her objections are.

**Varieties.** There are at least three varieties of silent customers. (1) Sometimes they do not talk to salespeople because they do not talk to anybody. (2) Occasionally you find customers who are unwilling to talk to salespeople, though perfectly willing to talk to persons of what they consider to be their own social standing. (3) On still other occasions the difficulty is due to the fact that they do not like to talk to strangers, but once started they may become quite fluent. This is sometimes the result of shyness, though not always.

#### SECTION 2. HOW TO HANDLE THE SILENT CUSTOMER

THE silent customer seems to give a good deal of trouble, because, as has just been stated, we are never sure that she is getting what she wants or that we have shown just exactly what she should have.

Because of the fact that she presents so many difficulties, expert salespeople have much to say about how to handle her. They say, of course, that a good deal of it must be guesswork, but that there are five things that may be done.

**Show courtesy.** As in so many other situations, interest



and courtesy are important. "In a good many cases," says one salesperson who has little trouble with silent customers, "your aim should be to show in every way that you want to give her all the help she needs in finding what she likes. The one thing I do not do is to act indifferent or as though I wanted to hurry her along or force her to buy before she is satisfied. I don't think you ought to lose patience just because she does n't answer or make comments. You have to keep on trying."

**Get her to talk.** Others attempt to lead her to talk about something else if she will not talk about the merchandise. "If, for instance, she is looking through china, it is often possible to get her started on the servant problem. Maids and their dish-breaking habits are a source of inspiration to a lot of woman who would otherwise be silent." Another topic that comes in handy is the weather. In departments selling children's clothes, the customer may often be drawn out by a reference to her boy or girl. There are any number of interesting things to discuss with a customer, and it is all right to talk about these when it is the only way to lead her up to talking about the merchandise.

**The customer's needs.** In the third place, all discussion of the goods should be connected directly with the customer's use of them. In the conversation it is necessary to make her see how the article shown will be suitable for her use. We should talk up its excellent quality, its style, its value for the money, its ability to stand long and hard wear, its ease of operation (in the case of mechanical devices), and all such characteristics. "We must make suggestions as to possible use for this and for other goods that we have not yet shown, to see if the customer can be made to say, 'I should like to look at that.'"

**Make her commit herself.** Some salespeople try to make the silent customer say at least "Yes" or "No." They ask such questions as, "Is the dress for yourself or some one else?" "Do you want it as long as that?" "Do

you like the wide skirt or the narrow one? ” “ Would n't a darker shade of blue suit you better? ”

It will be noted that these questions do not require long answers. You act rather like a lawyer cross-examining a witness, who is expected always to answer by yes or no. You try to find out all the details about what she wants, and you do this by asking these questions. Other suggestive questions are, “ Would you care for something in a better grade? ” “ We have something like this at a lower price. Would you be interested in seeing it? ” “ This has a good deal of trimming; but a good many ladies rather like simple styles. Shall I show you something of that sort? ” “ This is one of our newest types of large hand-bag. Do you need that kind? ”

A salesman in the shoe department holds up each shoe as he brings it out, turning it around so that the customer can get a good look at it. “ I ask him whether he likes this toe and whether this is what he had in mind. I speak of the style, the quality, and the color, asking him if he likes each of the points. If I cannot get him to say what he likes, I keep on showing others, until I get something out of him about some one pair. Then I play up that pair until I get a definite yes or no out of him.”

**Show goods.** A good many salespeople trust more to showing the goods than to conversation, and as they show they watch the expression of the customer's face to see what she is thinking. Such people feel that you can “ really get more out of the customer this way than by any amount of questioning.”

All through this, whether showing goods or talking, the face of the customer must be studied for signs of interest or indifference. In her expression lies the main hope of determining what she likes. A frowning or troubled face will tell you she does not like what she is looking at, or that she is uncertain as to what will do. If her eyes open and brighten, if she smiles and nods her head, her

pleasure speaks more loudly than if she had used words. In many ways which hardly need mention, even the silent woman can show her feelings.

### SECTION 3. HOW TO SIZE-UP THE LOOKER

By the "looker" is meant a person who spends a great deal of time in the store examining the merchandise without any present intention of buying.

**Varieties.** There are three or four different types of people who may be called lookers: *First*, the customer who may be only passing the time. *Second*, the one who is looking with the idea that there may possibly be something that she will want at this time or later. *Third*, the woman who is shopping in different stores to see where she can get the best value for her money in connection with a particular item. *Fourth*, the professional shopper sent out by another store.

**How recognized.** The looker is usually recognized by the fact that when you ask her if she wants something she will in all probability reply that she is merely looking and that if she wants anything she will let you know. If she walks through a department without asking for attention, stopping idly here and there, picking up this and that, but answering any question or offer of help with "No, I don't want help; I am not buying anything to-day," we can be sure she belongs to this class. At other times she is more difficult to recognize because she may take a great deal of the time of the salesperson, leading the latter to show her a great amount of merchandise which she has no intention of buying.

Sometimes when they fail to reply to our question about whether we can help them or not, we can judge by their manner. They usually seem to be killing time, for they stop to examine merchandise which would not be proper or suitable for them. They seem to have no method in their journey around a department, and if they do not

look up to ask questions or look around for a salesperson to help them, we can assume that they are "merely looking." In any ready-to-wear department they may usually be recognized by their refusal to try on the garment they have been looking at.

#### SECTION 4. HOW TO HANDLE THE LOOKER

**See if she wants help.** In the case of the woman who is just spending time and does not want to be bothered, several suggestions are made. "I ask her if I can be of any service, just to try her out. Then if she says, 'No,' I let her alone." "I approach her and get her eye. If I see that she wants to look by herself, I leave her alone; but I try to stay near enough so that if she does want some one, she won't have to look very far for help." "If they don't want to be bothered, I go off, first assuring them of my willingness to serve when they are ready."

It is very important in handling lookers to find out right away whether or not they wish to be followed around. Some women think we are neglecting them if we let them go around and look by themselves, while others — many others — do not enjoy their shopping if some one tags around after them all the time. They know what they are looking for and will be able to make up their minds themselves when they see it. The salesperson can usually find out which way they feel by simply asking them, "Shall I help you or would you rather be left alone until you see something you want? When you do, just let me know."

**If she wants too much attention.** If, on the other hand, she claims a great deal of attention from the salesperson, there are various ways of handling her.

"If I am free, I give her attention, but not if I have waiting customers who really want something. I speak to her politely, but if she does n't make up her mind as time goes on, and others come in, I excuse myself, saying that



when she does make up her mind I will be right there." The salesperson must treat all "shoppers" and lookers courteously; but she must not do this to the disadvantage of those who are waiting to buy.

**Making a purchaser out of her.** It is particularly important that the looker should be treated courteously because she may buy later on, or indeed she *may* turn into an immediate buyer. One saleswoman says: "One of these women paid no attention to me, and I concluded she did n't want to be bothered, so I did not force myself upon her, but just stayed near, fixing my stock. I noticed she was picking over a remnant pile without saying anything, or even looking at me. But, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed she was examining only two-yard lengths and those nearest that length. So I went to the shelf, and got more remnants that had not as yet been marked, picked out the two-yard lengths, pinned the tags on them, and laid them on the counter, pushing them slightly toward her. Pretty soon she picked out several and handed me the money, and neither of us said two words during the whole sale."

**Show bargains.** If a woman seems to be a "shopper" rather than a looker, that can be told by the searching questions she asks. It is wise to show her any unusual bargains. Shoppers are usually looking for bargains, and are in the state of mind where they are not particularly anxious to buy, but will if they see something reduced which they think they can use. So, good salespeople carefully steer the shoppers toward the table or counter where there are remnants or reduced goods, or special bargains, and try to make a sale there. Not only does a bargain in price attract the shopper, but more particularly a bargain in values, and the argument that the piece being considered is of extra-good value frequently clinches the sale.

### SECTION 5. THE FOREIGNER'S CHARACTERISTICS

IN some parts of our country, notably in Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and other large manufacturing centers, there is a considerable foreign population which must be reckoned with in the larger department stores. It is for the benefit of salespeople in such cities that the following notes have been made as to the characteristics of the foreign customer and the best methods of handling him.

He is, of course, recognized by the fact that he does not speak English very well. However, even when this is the case, he frequently understands what we say to him if we speak slowly and carefully. At the same time he may have very great difficulty in talking to us.

**Characteristics.** Not all foreigners are alike, but they have a good many characteristics in common. They are often shy because they cannot understand the language and so become easily confused. They are sensitive about being made fun of; and often a joke passed from one salesperson to another about something else may cause offense to the foreign customer, who thinks the salespeople are laughing at him.

We are told that they know what they want, that they do not come in unless they are going to buy, that they know what they want to pay and usually have the money with them. In many cases, particularly during the last few years, they have been spending money lavishly and demanding the best that is to be had.

They are not at all backward about asking prices. They usually want to know the price of an article immediately, and the salesperson usually need feel very little hesitancy about stating the price very early in the sale. This is true because foreigners are usually bargain-hunters and have been accustomed in the Old World to having an argument about the price. In some cases this has led them to think that the prices asked here have been set higher than

necessary because the merchant expects to have to come down.

They are particularly interested in the wearing qualities of what they are buying. They want to know whether a pair of shoes will last, whether the child's coat is all-wool, whether material will wrinkle quickly or show shine. In the case of gloves it is reported that they insist on having large sizes for everyday wear, so as to make them last longer, but will accept snug-fitting kinds for best wear. We are told, also, that in many cases they burn threads or chew them in order to test a fabric.

The foreigners are very appreciative of help and kindness, once we secure their confidence. "I have a lot of them here and they are just lovely to wait on."

It is very hard to define precisely all the characteristics of foreigners. But those which have just been mentioned seem, in the experience of a large number of people, to be conspicuous in enough instances for us to pay attention to them.

## SECTION 6. HOW TO HANDLE THE FOREIGNER

**Simple language.** Some stores provide interpreters, but many salespeople try to get along without them as far as possible, because the foreigners are sensitive about needing such help. If we try to do without this, we are told that it is best to use simple language and short sentences. We have to ask direct questions. "I use gestures a good deal, and show plenty of all kinds of my goods in a pleasant manner, and I let the merchandise and the price do most of the talking."

**Kindliness.** "They need kind and friendly treatment." "The foreigners need some one to help them to learn how to buy in America and to teach them to ask clearly for what they want until they get a better education, and we salespeople have to do many things for them and take the burden on ourselves."

A willing, friendly manner and an understanding of what they want will gain their confidence, and once we have that we can almost order them to take what they ought to have. In getting their confidence, we must be honest with them, but it does not pay to be too dignified. Easy friendliness is better. "I don't ever let them think that I imagine I am superior to them, so I talk on their level and jolly them along."

**Patience.** Patience is important. We must listen closely while they try to tell what they want, or why they object to what we are showing, and be very patient in making them understand what we say to them about the goods. It is often necessary to say it over many times. "Take your time showing goods," says one successful salesperson. Another says, "You have to talk a lot to them — say things over and over again."

**Show goods.** But another salesperson says: "There is little use talking to most of them. Keep on pulling out goods until they see something they like. You must not talk too much or you may confuse them."

**Other aids.** It is a great help to concentrate your attention on them all the time you are waiting on them. Keep your eyes on your customer. Don't joke with anybody else during the sale. Listen to what they are trying to tell you. The following are a few statements the salespeople make about foreigners:

"You have to learn what kind of merchandise in your department is the favorite among the foreigners, and be ready to show them that. For instance, in our store, in white goods, they mostly ask for lawn or batiste to make up into christening robes."

"If my customers are foreigners, I try to act wise, as if I know my business very well, but I don't say much. In almost every case when they come in here [women's ready-to-wear], they say 'We want wedding clothes.' It seems best usually to begin with the moderate prices, although



sometimes they pay a good price for a suit or dress. My foreigners usually want fussy things. I use the same friendliness I do to others, but it has to be expressed differently to them. They usually decide rather quickly, but sometimes it is necessary to please several people, even the man, for he often comes along."

"It is hard to handle foreigners in the millinery department, for you sort of have to make over their tastes without offending them, and making them think you are putting something over on them. You have to be very definite. You must not say a hat is 'smart,' because that does n't mean much to them. But if you say instead, 'See the pretty flowers,' or, 'My, that makes you look nice,' they understand you."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What varieties of silent customers are there?
2. Describe fully two silent customers you have known, giving five qualities for each besides the failure to talk much.
3. What methods of handling are mentioned in the text?
4. Tell a story about how you have handled a silent customer (or have seen one handled) in some interesting way and induced him to buy.
5. Describe the different kinds of lookers.
6. Give other illustrations of what may be said to the looker who takes too much of the salesperson's time.
7. Give two illustrations of where sales have failed because the salesperson failed to size up a looker correctly.
8. What in your experience are the chief difficulties met in selling to foreigners?
9. Tell a story of a most satisfactory foreign customer.
10. In what respects would you differ with the text in your handling of foreigners?

## CHAPTER VII

### MISCELLANEOUS QUALITIES

#### SECTION I. FRIENDLINESS

**Characteristics.** It would be a mistake to write a book on handling customers without mentioning some of those who are easy to handle. Among these there are a very large number of people who have pleasing dispositions, who speak in courteous tones, who have a friendly manner, and whose wants are readily satisfied. "This is the kind you can make suggestions to," says one salesperson. Another remarks that "the customer may say she wants a becoming hat, at something near the right price, and you can sell her a red hat even though she may have asked for a green one." The customer is called "easy" who hates to make trouble, and who apologizes when she has made you get out a lot of goods. You feel that these pleasant customers know you are trying to help them. They ask questions as though they really had some regard for your ideas. When they go out or come in they have a pleasant greeting or word of appreciation, and when you say, "How do you do?" they respond "like ladies, with something besides a grunt."

"I love to wait on a pleasant, reasonable customer," says one salesperson. "She is not hard to sell to, even when quite particular about what she gets, because if you have the goods, she buys promptly, and if not, she may be persuaded to take something else on your advice." Sometimes the pleasant customer is in addition practical and business-like, thrifty, wanting her money's worth; or, on the other hand, she may be interested in extreme styles, and careless about the spending of her money.

**How to handle.** Friendliness is not hard to handle, and there are really only two pitfalls into which we may tumble

if we are careless: First, we must watch our manner with pleasant people who are quite reserved. For instance, both Mrs. A and Mrs. B may be pleasant and friendly, but Mrs. A may be quite dignified, elderly, and well-bred, while Mrs. B thinks of herself as only an everyday sort of person. We must be careful, then, not to treat Mrs. A and Mrs. B in the same way, just because they both happen to be pleasant. Mrs. B might be entirely satisfied with our friendly ways, while Mrs. A would think them too familiar. We have to size-up pleasant people for something besides their pleasant manner.

And we are told that some other friendly people present another problem. They may be of the jovial kind that will come in with a joke, and perhaps call to us halfway across the department. If they stop, they pat us on the arm, and after they have bought on two or three occasions they treat us like old friends. Such customers are difficult to handle because we have to keep our own dignity, and yet have to avoid seeming less friendly than they are. Just how to be friendly enough, and yet not go too far and lose dignity, is quite a problem.

## SECTION 2. GOOD-BREEDING

THIS is a general term which we use with customers whom we think of as belonging to the best social class. Sometimes they are pleasant, though occasionally unpleasant. Some of them are particular, superior, and distant, while others are courteous, cultured, and appreciative. There are still others of the type we have just been speaking of — the pleasant, friendly type.

The well-bred woman is recognized in general by her dignified appearance, her educated talk, her low voice and cultivated tone and accent, her good taste, and a combination of courtesy and reserve. On the whole she is a pleasant customer to serve, because she is likely to be courteous and considerate. As has been said in the

previous section, she is often easy and friendly as long as the salesperson does not make the mistake of treating her in a manner which may be considered familiar. Frequently she knows a good deal about merchandise. She seldom spends beyond her means, and sometimes, if extremely particular about getting exactly what she wants, she may seem like a fussy customer.

**How to handle.** One difficulty in handling well-bred people is in recognizing them when you see them. Some salespeople think of dignity as being snippiness, and reserve as being unfriendliness. They consider that being particular is fussiness, and any attempt to discourage familiarity is described as being nasty or disagreeable.

But the keynote of salespeople's attitude toward any person whom they recognize as being dignified, cultivated, and well-bred must be a dignity of their own, as becomes a person who is doing a piece of work cheerfully and intelligently. They must adopt a pleasant, courteous, and well-bred manner, themselves, and one that never approaches familiarity. If the customer seems to prefer to be silent, salespeople should follow suit, talk little and ask few questions. They should not dispute the customer's taste or preference, nor argue.

Usually conservative styles should be shown rather than those which are radical. Prices must depend upon what seems to be the customer's preference. Many women of this kind have less money to spend than others, and need a great deal of tactful help in finding merchandise that is simple and in good taste, without costing too much. They often present the problem phrased by the fur saleswoman who spoke of some one's having a "sable taste on a squirrel income."

Such a customer is usually nicer to wait on than the newly rich woman, whose income has climbed without raising her taste with it. But, regardless of what other qualities the well-bred woman may possess, it is always



safe to be pleasant and friendly without being so much so as to be considered familiar. "Keep your distance and don't talk too much."

### SECTION 3. THE ECONOMICAL GROUP

IN this group we have a large number of people who have one common characteristic: they are very keenly interested in the price of merchandise.

**The expert buyer.** The customer who, more than any other, shows up the salesperson's insufficient knowledge of her goods is the expert buyer. Such a customer usually knows exactly what she wants and is able to decide, as between several articles, which is the best for the price asked. In coming to this conclusion she sometimes knows enough about the goods to render it unnecessary for her to ask any questions, and very frequently she makes pointed, direct remarks which get right at the heart of the sale.

This group of people is very large and very influential in making or breaking a store. Good buyers have a local following because they are recognized as such among their friends. For instance, if a woman of this sort tells her friends that at such-and-such a store she obtained good values at a sale, the probability is that on the basis of her opinion several of them will attend that sale, too. Or, when she says, on the other hand, that the sale which has recently been held was a "fake" because there were no real bargains, her adverse opinion influences her friends.

The expert buyer is handled by showing her the best values we have and talking up the merchandise in our most business-like and intelligent manner.

**The stingy customer.** The stingy customer is the one who prefers to pay a very small price for a poor article rather than a bigger price for a much better article. She is more interested in spending a very small sum of money than in getting a very good value. She wants the best, but hates to pay for it. Very often the stingy person is

stingy because she has spent all she has on her clothes and has none left for the other things she needs. Since, in department stores, prices cannot be cut, we must handle the stingy person by showing inferior goods which have the appearance of quality but are cheap in price.

**The bargain-hunter.** The bargain-hunter differs from the stingy customer in that she is influenced strongly by the fact that for some reason or other goods are lower-priced than usual. She is interested to know, in the case of the marked-down price, what the article cost originally. If the reason for reducing it had nothing to do with its quality, it is important to say so. In the case of "seconds," which are very popular with bargain-hunters, it is well to show that while the reduction is great, the defect for which the reduction has been made is very slight. The bargain-hunter should usually be shown at first all the reduced and all the advertised goods. With this type of woman we must stress both quality and price, with the idea of showing that for some special reason the price is very low for the quality shown.

**Exacting taste—moderate means.** Then there are the customers whose taste far outruns their means. These are of two sorts—the woman with cultivated taste and restricted income, and the customer who is showy but stingy. Salespeople respect the woman with excellent taste in merchandise who tries to get simple, durable things, and who finds that everything she wants costs more than she can pay. When the customer is quiet, pleasant, and well-bred, it is a pleasure to help her find something good the price of which is within her limit. One salesperson says: "When she looks disappointed at the price of the thing she wants to buy, I try to help her out because I know how it feels, myself, to have to buy common things when I would far rather have the lovely ones. So I look around and try to find something like what she wants, but at a lower price. When I show it to her, I call attention to the

way in which it is not so good as the first, but emphasize the points in which it is just as good. I say, for instance, 'See how well made it is,' or 'It is just as good *quality* as the other, but it does n't have the fancy corners and so is only \$3.50.' "

On the other hand, we have the showy, stingy customer, who wants to make an impressive appearance with a very small outlay, and the method of handling her is quite different from that just mentioned. As these people prefer to own showy things which are low in price, they have to be offered this kind of showy merchandise, whether or not it possesses any great amount of durability, if the store has that kind of goods in stock.

**The business-like customer.** Nearly all men are regarded as business-like customers and as such are not hard to wait on. The same is true of many women of the business class. Both of these are likely to appreciate the value of time, so that they do not waste their time or yours, and to appreciate the worth of money so much that they watch values closely. They are usually recognized by their firm, brisk walk, trim, well-kept clothes, and brief, direct way of talking. Often they know goods rather well and in many cases they are the best customers. They do not buy expensive things, but they come back regularly, demand good value, and appreciate intelligent service.

#### SECTION 4. THE SHOWY GROUP

THE showy group is much more interested in appearances than in any other factor in choosing merchandise.

**The spender.** A familiar figure is the customer who loves to spend money, whether or not she needs the goods she is buying, and whether or not she is obliged to buy as expensive goods as she does. This kind frequently does not ask the price until she is asked to pay for the article, or she may have it charged, with apparently no interest at all in the price. These people invite their own fate, and it

is not surprising that salespeople show them the slowest sellers in the department and the particularly high-priced goods that have "stuck." "The extravagant woman turns up her nose at fine goods if they are moderate in price. 'Is *that* the best you have?' she seems to be asking all the time, and insists on something higher, even if it is not so desirable for her purpose." "She may not ask the price at all, and just tell me to send the best I have," says one saleswoman, "but I feel some responsibility for her, and I don't always send her the most expensive. I try instead to pick out what will suit her so perfectly that it will stay sold."

The *easiest* way to handle the spender is to show her anything and have her take it, but the *wisest* way is — provided she is willing to take your advice — to help her to protect herself against buying things she may be dissatisfied with afterward.

**The vain customer.** We have also the vain customers, who have to be flattered if they are to buy. "You have to jolly them a lot in selling garments. They want a good deal of comment and attention, and they particularly like you to point out the ways in which the garment looks well on them."

Also under this heading, we have the type which is called the "would-be swell," further described as the woman without breeding, sense, or education, who tries to impress the salespeople with her wealth and general superiority. This kind of woman often wears gorgeous outer clothes, which cover (when she goes to try on) shoddy, sloppy undergarments.

Such people — unpleasant though they are — must be deferred to courteously and treated just as though they were "the real thing."

**The "faddy" customer.** Somewhat different is the "faddy" customer, who does not care about durability, becomingness, or beauty, but only whether the merchan-



dise is in the very latest style. She changes her way of dress with each new fashion, and her household decorations every season; this causes her to waste a great deal of money buying novelties before the older things are ready to lay aside. She can be sold anything if it can be shown that it is absolutely "the latest" from Paris, or New York, or any other "style center."

#### SECTION 5. MISCELLANEOUS

**The grouchy customer.** Grouchiness is shown by short temper and impatience. Sometimes it comes out in violent scolding, at other times in a stiff, hostile silence. It is agreed that such customers are best handled when the salesperson is just as pleasant as the customer ought to be. No attention is paid to his rudeness, if a man, or to her scolding or fault-finding, if a woman. Put on your quietest and most dignified manner, ignore insults, use tact and good nature, and keep on showing goods. We are told that such actions sometimes make the grouchy customer ashamed of himself so that when the sale is over the bad temper has disappeared and "a pleasant time is had by all." It is perfectly clear that you cannot get a customer into a good humor by being disagreeable yourself, so you might just as well try the effect of being nice, because it usually works. If it does not, you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have been more of a lady or gentleman than the customer has been.

**The superior customer.** A very disagreeable customer is the one who is sneeringly superior to the salesman or to the goods. It is not always easy to tell whether this is unconscious and habitual or whether it is put on so as to make the salesperson feel inferior. Such a customer sometimes says, "Have n't you anything nicer than *that*?" or perhaps mentions better lines in other stores, to indicate that although she has plenty of money she certainly will not spend it here. Such people are handled by pleasant

self-respect. It is a mistake to quarrel with them. They must be given courteous service, while the salesperson stays calm, talks to them, argues not at all, and keeps the voice low and pleasant, paying no attention to either their manner or their words.

**The suspicious customer.** The suspicious customer comes into the store sometimes. Perhaps she may have been "stung" at another store, or perhaps at this one, and she feels that the salesperson is inclined to misrepresent. She gazes at you as though you were not telling the truth. She seems to doubt everything that you say.

As in other cases, courtesy and patience are necessary, but here it is advised to speak very candidly, claiming for the goods only what you are sure of, and being as open as possible. Some salespeople, when the sale is nearly made, make a practice of calling the buyer to support their statements. This protects the salesperson, helps to convince the suspicious customer, and has a tendency also to flatter her.

**The unreasonable customer.** The unreasonable customer is one who demands more than he has any right to. He may expect to be waited upon immediately, and out of his turn. He insists on having an undue amount of time given to him, even though all he wants is a collar button. Or he wants to see everything in stock and then goes off without buying. Such customers may come in on the opening day of a sale, leave without buying, return a week or so later ready to buy, and then get quite angry because the things they wanted are not there any longer.

Such customers tax the patience and courtesy of the salesperson to the limit. The man who sells linen says he has one customer who, every time she buys even a half-dozen napkins, hesitates and delays as though she were buying a house. "Just silly, I call it, and yet you can do nothing but be patient and let her have her way."

**The talkative customer.** The talkative customer does

not confine her conversation to the merchandise, but insists on dragging in family history, home troubles, or detailed narratives of operations and illnesses. She enjoys visiting and talking to people. Sometimes she airs her knowledge of the goods and is pleased if you show that you think she has a great deal of information. To the talkative customer one must be polite, but not responsive. When she talks, conversation must be turned back to the goods under consideration, and no questions about the outside matters should be asked that will lead her to talk further on these. If the sale is completed and the salesperson sees another customer who looks as though she wants attention, she should excuse herself and go to the other one, even though the talkative customer is still standing around. If the sale is not completed, then the salesperson should turn toward the second woman and say that she will be with her in a moment, as soon as she is free. This will give the talkative one a hint which may prove effective.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Describe two friendly customers who differ in several other qualities.
2. What troubles do you or other people sometimes have in handling friendly customers?
3. List all the qualities you have noticed which show good-breeding.
4. Tell a story of a pleasant experience you have had with a well-bred customer.
5. Tell of an unpleasant experience with one. Explain why this occurred, if you can.
6. Tell a story illustrative of how you have handled each of the following (or seen them handled) in a particularly successful way:
  - (a) The expert buyer.
  - (b) The stingy customer.
  - (c) The bargain-hunter.
  - (d) The spender.
  - (e) The vain customer.
  - (f) The grouchy customer.

- (g) The superior customer.
- (h) The suspicious customer.
- (i) The unreasonable customer.
- (j) The talkative customer.

If you know any humorous stories about these people, be sure to include them.



## CHAPTER VIII

### FAILURES IN SIZING-UP AND HANDLING CUSTOMERS

#### SECTION I. GENERAL MISTAKES

SIZING-UP and handling customers are so important that we shall devote a chapter to the ways in which people fail to perform these duties successfully. While the foregoing chapters told things salespeople should *do* in sizing-up customers, this chapter will describe the things that they should *avoid doing*.

**Indifference.** Many people do not attempt to size-up customers at all, or, if they do size them up, they do it inaccurately and incorrectly. This is largely owing to indifference or to lack of keenness, if their attention has ever been called to it. It is particularly bad because you never find that the successful salespeople come from the ranks of the indifferent and the careless.

We are told that many salespeople are unable to size-up accurately because "they don't watch their customer's appearance and actions nor listen closely enough to what is said, so they show the wrong thing and talk the wrong way, allowing the customer to slip through their fingers. Frequently they not only don't listen to her questions, but even when they ask her questions they don't pay any attention to what she says." In many cases "they are not friendly enough when they start the sale. They act distant when they ought to walk up quickly and speak pleasantly to the customer. This is quite important, because you have to warm up many people before they are in good humor to buy."

**Unpleasantness.** They are not nice enough during the sale, nor pleasant and friendly enough when they close it,

to make the customer want to come back. The same lack of friendliness shows itself in their attitude toward foreigners; it leads to their treating people in a tactless way. It also makes them pick and choose their customers, ignoring or neglecting the ones they do not like.

**Treat everybody alike.** They treat everybody the same, not realizing that it pays to try to find out how people like to be treated, and then suit them. Because of this "they don't catch on when it is necessary to coax a customer, or jolly a little in order to push the sale through. You can't get some people pleased except in that way, but you must learn how to recognize the kind when you see it, and not jolly the wrong ones." Frequently the wrong kind of merchandise is shown because the customer is not sized-up correctly.

**Dullness.** "Some people," says a saleswoman who has given a good deal of attention to the matter, "don't take enough interest in their work to suit the customer, and the consequence is that they bring out merchandise which any one could see with half an eye this particular customer would n't want. They show girlish things to the staid, elderly mother of a family and the most expensive kinds to the poor, tired-looking woman who probably does her own work. You would think anybody could tell by just looking, only they don't use the sense they have, that's the trouble. Then, even when the customer explains that she does n't want that at all, they keep on pulling out the same sort of stuff, as though they had n't heard a word. They show anything at hand, pay no attention to what she says or how she acts. Then when she goes away without buying, they blame *her!*"

Frequently they fail to guess the right size, price, or style. "You have to size-up their general appearance to tell what price of clothes to show first, without asking directly. Some girls show clothes that are entirely too expensive, and this embarrasses customers." "They are too quick

to make up their minds that the customers can't or won't pay over a certain price, so they don't get anything out over that price, and in that way lose many fine sales."

**Laziness.** No effort is made to judge customers right. "They don't take any trouble to try to change the customer's mind, if what she wants is n't to be had; for even if she seems very decided, you may persuade her to accept a substitute if you handle her right and don't get discouraged by her manner. I saw a girl the other day fail because she let a customer go, not having the exact shade of satin for a sash that was wanted. She showed piece after piece, but the shade was n't right and the customer had to give it up. But right near was plenty of crêpe meteor in the exact shade, which the customer might have been glad to have. It was worth trying, anyway, but the girl did n't try."

## SECTION 2. CUT-AND-DRIED SIZING-UP

ONE of the most serious weaknesses in sizing-up customers is the tendency to believe that certain signs always mean certain things. For instance, when we hear a woman say, "If they paint their faces, they are fast and common," or, "If they paint their faces, I know they won't buy," it is evident that she is using a rule that is absolutely wrong. But both of these assertions have been solemnly made by saleswomen in a large store, and they are only two out of a large collection of similar rules in daily use by many salespeople.

**Are these rules correct?** Here are a number of statements made by salespeople in the form of rules for sizing-up. It may be interesting to examine these, in order to see whether they are intelligent and trustworthy. Would you say that such "rules" as these always — or very often — hold good?

(1) "Certainly I judge by clothes. If a woman comes in wearing a tailored suit, I show her hammered silver."

(2) "The way they walk tells you whether they are going to buy."

(3) "You can always tell by the customer's face, the moment she comes in, whether she is going to buy or not."

(4) "When I get a person that seems to be only a looker, I wait to see if she keeps finding fault with the goods. Any one that criticizes the merchandise is sure to be a professional shopper from another store."

(5) "Foreigners always want the loudest colors."

(6) "Foreigners don't know what they want."

(7) "Well-dressed people are the best buyers."

(8) "If she comes in with a cross look, I know she is the disagreeable kind that can't be suited."

(9) "If she wanders around the department, we know she won't buy, and there is no use paying any attention to her."

The wise salesperson, like any other wise man or woman, is always learning from experience. He changes his rules from day to day as he comes into contact with more and more cases. All our rules are merely handy things to have around to help us, but once they cease to be our servants, and begin to be our masters, we are in danger of making many mistakes.

### SECTION 3. MISJUDGING QUALITIES

MANY salespeople tag a customer with a certain character, when really she is something quite different. They size-up their customers hastily, and classify them badly. They fall down because they treat a customer as though she had only one quality, whereas she is a combination of several, or because they treat her as of one type when really her outstanding quality calls for quite different treatment.

For example, there are many people who are called lookers, who in reality are buyers if they are handled correctly. As we have pointed out so frequently, the fact that a customer is looking around is no sign that she will not



buy. Very often salespeople ignore the looker's statement that she wants no help, as, for instance, in this case: "When the customer says, 'I am only looking, but don't need any help yet,' I just let on I don't notice what she says, and I don't pay any attention to how she acts; I just keep on talking to her in a friendly manner, going around with her and showing goods tactfully." How "tactful" this is, is left to the judgment of the reader!

Some salespeople naturally like the customer who does not care what she gets, and they say she is "easy to suit and pleasant." Because it is more trouble to wait on the customer who is particular about her selection, they are inclined to call her "fussy and disagreeable," when, as a matter of fact, she might be handled a great deal better if they looked on her as a close buyer who was particular in her selections. They would handle her better because they would not get cross at her, as they do when they think she is fussy.

The following cases indicate some of the most outstanding mistakes in judging characteristics.

**Five common mistakes.** (1) We call a customer "picky," fussy, and hard to suit, whereas she really may be only careful in buying. She wishes certain qualities and she will hunt until she finds them. She is cautious because she has made mistakes before in size, fit, color, or quality, so she wants to be very sure she is getting the right thing now.

(2) We call a customer "know-it-all," sure of her own opinion, unwilling to defer to the salesperson's knowledge or judgment, whereas she really is a customer who is a merchandise expert. She may be a woman with years of experience, with trained taste, who can be told absolutely nothing by the saleswoman. She is quite right to discourage information and reject advice. It is a good thing for salespeople to remember that in stores frequented by customers of means, education, and culture, the salesperson is not

greatly superior to many of her customers in either knowledge or taste.

(3) We may call a customer snobbish, superior, "catty," one who "thinks you are beneath her," whereas she often is only a silent, reserved person, not very genial even with her friends, and unable to be friendly with a stranger in the store. She is well-bred, slow to make friends, and regards the salesperson as a stranger, to be treated with courtesy, but not with friendliness. A wise salesperson says: "The severe, unsmiling person must not always be considered cross or disagreeable or hard to suit. It happens, perhaps, that she does n't like personal talk, and knows what she wants. She is all right if you tend strictly to business." "You cannot expect them all to be jolly." A store executive says that "much of the criticism of the customers by the salespeople is due to their failure to make allowance for different natures. The salesperson who has a free-and-easy manner is too apt to expect everybody else to be as free-and-easy as she is. She is very anxious to help, and shows her desire by patting the customer's shoulder, taking her arm, calling her 'dearie,' and volunteering information about the way this dress or that hat looks; and she cannot understand why so often the customer resents this, so she calls the customer snobbish or superior."

(4) We may call a customer easy, not fussy about cost, deferring to the salesperson's ideas, whereas she often is really a careless, extravagant woman, with no idea of the worth of merchandise, with no knowledge of fabrics, color, or durability. She takes anything the salesperson offers her, and pays any price asked. Such a customer may be esteemed by the salesperson, but she is not the type of person upon which a substantial business is built.

(5) A customer is called stingy, a bargain-hunter, "wanting something for nothing," fussy about price, "only comes in when goods are reduced," etc. All these criticisms may be applied to an entirely fine customer who

wants to get the best values for her money. Thriftiness is not to be despised. Indeed, it may be asked whether salespeople, when *they* go shopping, never question a price, or never refuse to buy a thing because it costs too much. Do they or do they not make a beeline for the bargain-counter? Do they ever find their salaries too small for their needs and so have to take what help they can from reduction sales? The so-called "bargain-hunter" is often the wife of a low-salaried worker, who is trying to make his pay stretch over the hundred needs of home and babies, trying in the face of low income and high prices to live decently. What this customer shows is not a disagreeable quality—it is a hard-pushed and brave thriftiness that should be recognized, respected, and helped.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Who among your friends is the worst judge of character? Give cases. Why is he or she a poor judge?
2. Give three cases where in your own observation other salespeople have made clear mistakes in estimating people, sizing them up as one kind when you knew they were something else.
3. Why do salespeople fail to size-up customers correctly?
4. Discuss the nine "rules" in section 2.
5. Collect five other rules about sizing-up and state the extent to which they are true.
6. Tell three other stories like the five in section 3 which have come under your notice.
7. Size-up five people who are strangers to you, just as soon you can, and then check up on them later to see if you have changed your mind about them.
8. What are your weaknesses in sizing-up?
9. In what respects are you a good judge?
10. What do you need to do to improve your ability to size-up people?
11. Do you enjoy sizing-up people as a sort of game? If so, how did you learn to do it?

## CHAPTER IX

### INTEREST AND COURTESY

#### SECTION I. COURTEOUS INTEREST

**Introduction.** In a questionnaire sent out to customers, asking them to state the considerations which led them to return to the same salesperson repeatedly for service, it was found that the most attractive qualities of salespeople are interest, courtesy, and pleasing personality. The votes show quite clearly that in the minds of the customers courtesy is twice as important as intelligence. Similarly, when they were asked what sort of actions in salespeople were particularly displeasing to them, they listed indifference and discourtesy three times for ignorance once. When asked what were their reasons for trading at certain stores, forty-three per cent stated that it was interested and courteous service, while only thirty-one per cent trade with a store because of its special values in merchandise.

These facts show that while good values and keen salespeople are of importance in attracting trade, the most important single characteristic is that of interest and courtesy.

The reason for this is that customers feel that if they can be shown the goods willingly and cheerfully, they know enough about the merchandise to be able to make their own choices. Whether or not this is true is beside the point. The important thing is that they think it is true and that they are most likely to be satisfied if the service is satisfactory.

The first practical directions given to salespeople, after they learn how to fill out a sales-check and to find their way about the store, have to do with the necessity of being courteous. But definite details about exactly how to show



courtesy are not always given. The inexperienced salesperson is handicapped in learning how to show courtesy because the experienced salespeople have seldom thought out how they themselves are courteous. Or, even if they have done this, they do not find the opportunity to tell other people how they may do likewise.

To be sure, most people want to be courteous; but they do not know how to show it. Courtesy is different at the dinner table from what it is in business, and to have a *feeling* of kindness and courtesy is not sufficient. There are special methods by which it is shown, and this is particularly true in retail selling.

Our salespeople agree with everybody when they say that one has to start with courteous feelings in the heart. No person can long pretend successfully to be courteous and interested if he does not feel so.

**Courteous actions.** (1) Courteous interest is shown through courteous actions. The customer is addressed pleasantly, sometimes with a conventional "Good-morning" or "Good-afternoon," or sometimes with a polite remark about the merchandise. If the customer is well known, inquiries may be made concerning herself or her family. No special form can be given for the greeting. It depends upon the customer and upon the situation. "Just act naturally," says one. A smile of greeting is mentioned by many, or, as one says, "I smile, but not so very much." The smile must not be forced or over-friendly. As we have seen, some customers prefer to be waited on in a precise, business-like manner, so salespeople learn to size up their customers to see how much friendliness they prefer, but undoubtedly every one appreciates and enjoys a pleasant, smiling greeting, and particularly if his name is known and used.

We are advised to look directly into the face of customers when they speak, and fix our attention upon what they say so that they may see we are interested. We must

give undivided attention. We should not look into space, examine our finger-nails, or talk unnecessarily to another salesperson while the customer is being served.

**Promptness.** (2) Promptness in turning toward the customer or moving from what we are doing is a mark of interest. "Greet the customer as soon as he approaches." "Be alert. Notice a customer promptly and approach her at once in a friendly, brisk manner." "In selling I find that coming up to the customer as soon as possible makes a good impression. I think that all customers like to feel that some attention is paid them upon their approach. This particularly applies if other work is laid aside when they come in, in order that we may wait upon them." "Promptness in noticing a customer when you cannot immediately wait on her is important. I notice the customer by, perhaps, a smiling nod, even when busy, and I tell her I will wait upon her in a moment." "A particularly pleasing form of courtesy is that by which the customer is thanked at the close of the sale, and asked in some informal way to come again, while the salesperson takes the trouble to see that she gets her packages."

**Adapting the manner to the customer.** (3) Courteous interest is shown when care is taken to size up the customer so as to give her the kind of service that she prefers. Some people like easy friendliness, others are apt rather to resent it. One saleswoman says that she thinks what customers want is not friendliness, but just attention. "I really say very little at first. I watch to see whether she seems to want me to help a good deal, or would rather be left to herself. Sometimes the less you say the better, but if she is inclined to be talkative, I get friendly and perhaps talk about the weather or some other impersonal topic. If she seems reserved, I use a different manner." Another salesperson waits — as she expresses it — to get her cue from the customer: "I smile at her when she comes up, and from then on I devote myself to her and enter pleas-

antly into *any conversation she starts*." Another saleswoman says, "I assume a pleasant manner on the customer's approach, and talk about other things if the customer starts to, but not otherwise. Often I find I must sympathize in personal affairs, but I get over these as quickly as possible."

**Personal attentions.** (4) Many little attentions help to give the impression of courtesy. In some departments the customer is offered a chair in which to sit. When the sale is over she is helped on with her coat. The forgetful, who leave packages and things around, are watched to see that they take everything with them. When they wish to telephone, the salesperson offers to get the number if business is not too rushing in the department. Sometimes customers who do not buy are told "to think it over" and the salesperson will telephone them later for their decision, thus closing the sale. Often gift packages are given special attention. The customer in some departments, when time permits, is conducted to the elevator. "When she says she wants to shop in a near-by department, I take her to it if I have time and introduce her to a salesperson who will treat her nicely."

## SECTION 2. INTELLIGENT INTEREST

IN the preceding section we have been talking about the *courteous* interest which springs from friendliness. By *intelligent* interest we mean the interest in which we use our brains to help the customer select her material in the most satisfactory manner. There are nine ways in which this can be shown.

**Willing display.** (1) The experts whom we consulted first of all show goods freely and willingly. "I learn the kind of garment wanted and then display not one, but several." "I show her as much as necessary, but not too much, which might distract her." "Show merchandise fully,

but remove those pieces in which the customer indicates lack of interest."

**Finding out exactly what the customer wants.** (2) Both before showing merchandise and while showing it, the expert salespeople try very hard to find out exactly what the customer wants. They ask a few questions, but not too many. They listen carefully. "By listening carefully you can ask intelligent questions." Close attention is paid to the expression of the customer's face when she is looking at the merchandise, also to any remarks she may make or any questions she may ask.

Some salespeople go to considerable lengths to find out exactly what the customer wants. For instance, one saleswoman in the drapery department says: "Some customers don't bring samples of their wall-paper, which decides largely what kind of draperies they should buy. If they can't describe it, I take them to the wall-paper section, and have them pick some paper as nearly like their own as they can find, and then make suggestions for draperies."

A saleswoman in the corset department says that she develops a real interest in her customers and that she does not have to pretend at all. "I really feel an interest, because, in order to suit the woman, I have to study her figure and get the right thing for her from the standpoint of both style and comfort."

**Talk about the merchandise.** (3) The best salespeople explain the goods and talk about their good points. "Keep up a cheerful conversation concerning the quality of the goods, inducing the customer to talk frankly."

**They know their merchandise.** (4) "I try to estimate accurately how much material she needs. I help plan the dress, suggest other material, and give fashion hints." "If I know anything interesting about the merchandise which I have heard from the buyer or other customers, I tell her." "I know the stock so that I can make suggestions."

It is very important to make your merchandise talk



sound interesting. Some salespeople say they adopt a forceful manner of conversation and say only concrete things about what they are showing. A salesman in men's furnishings, for instance, instead of saying that "These shirts are fine," makes such statements as, "Every shirt is guaranteed fast color," "Note the excellent workmanship in this," etc.

The personal touch is shown in such statements as this: "I display my interest by showing the customer the *right* blouse for *her*, or I try to persuade the customer about what is really becoming to her."

**Suggest other articles.** Good salespeople suggest other merchandise in two ways. (5) In the first place, if they do not have the exact article wanted, they try to show something else along the same lines. (6) Or, in the second place, when one article has been bought, they suggest others that the customer would like to have to go with it.

With regard to the first point, one salesman says: "I never say I don't have what the customer asks for, and stop there. I show her something; then if it is not what she wants, and she speaks of going elsewhere, I agree and ask her to come back." "The customer likes to be waited on quickly, and if you don't have what she asks for, she is often glad to have you suggest something to take the place of what she had in mind."

Suggestions concerning the purchase of other merchandise to go with what the customer has bought are made by one saleswoman as follows: "Another way of showing interest is to suggest other articles that the customer might need because of her present purchase. I remember going one time to buy a suit. The saleswoman took a great deal of pains to find the kind I wanted, and when the sale was made she asked me if I had heard of the sale of collars going on on that day in a neighboring department store. She was sure I would find there just the one needed for my suit, and knew I could get a bargain. Her

own store had no neckwear department, so she was n't injuring its trade, and she certainly created a good impression by her interest."

**Other marks of intelligent interest.** There are three interesting and simple points which are worthy of mention. These have to do with not talking too rapidly, not talking too much, and treating the merchandise carefully.

(7) "Don't answer too quickly, but show the customer that you are thinking over what she has said in order to give her what she wants." "Show by your looks and speech that you are thinking of what she wants." "Keep your eyes on the merchandise and her." "Show by what you say that you are giving the question your careful thought."

(8) "Don't talk too much. Too great talkativeness makes the customer feel that you are more interested in the sale than in her problem." "You can talk yourself into a sale and then out again."

(9) "Treat your merchandise with dignity. When showing merchandise, handle it carefully, and by so doing make the customer feel that her purchase, no matter what it is, is considered valuable in the store."

### SECTION 3. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

A WOMAN who believes in selling helpfulness along with house-furnishings says: "A customer came in who did not know about poaching eggs. When told how to do it, and shown how to use a poacher, she was very grateful and bought one. You can talk well about the things in your department if you know about them, and understand how they are used."

In the photographic supplies: "I try to show the customer that I am interested by displaying all the lines I can. I don't insist on her buying when I have shown her only one or two things. I often tell a good deal about the goods, but if I size the customers up as a 'professional amateur' in photography, I don't say much. He thinks

he knows it all, and resents being told. One clerk here oversells goods to these amateurs; I've told him not to, and sometimes I can see him catch himself, rub his head, and stop talking!"

A carpet salesman tries to prove to his customer that he has her interests at heart and will give her exactly what she ought to buy, even at the occasional expense of his merchandise. For instance: "I tell her a certain rug might not give very good service (even if I know it would). Then I point out another (of perhaps the same price and quality) and tell her I could recommend *that* one sincerely. I don't think there's any misrepresentation in that, and customers fall for it. They think then that you will surely tell them the truth about everything. But if a thing is punk, I don't try to deceive the customer — I tell her it's worth the price we are asking, but that it probably won't wear very well, etc."

"If a customer seems shy, I smile and try to get her to speak. 'Don't you think this is nice?' or, 'How does this appeal to you?' 'Won't you tell me what you are interested in? I am at your service and will be glad to show you what we have and tell you whatever you want to know about it.'"

"One of my good customers asked for some duvetyn for a bag. I told her that duvetyn was 'done for' and suggested a new figured material. She bought this, very much pleased that I had n't let her get duvetyn — I think it showed her I was friendly."

"I approach my man with a smile and a warm feeling. A sale is half made by approaching him in a kind, brotherly way." "Sometimes a fellow comes in in a bad humor, and when I get one that way I suit my tune to him — I give him to understand that 'my time is his time.' " "I don't stop with showing him one line; I keep on showing until he says 'This will do!' But you must n't be too friendly with a customer, you have to size him up."

“Some customers ‘just want to look around,’ and prefer to be left alone. Let them, but show that you are interested in their being suited, by passing near them casually, once in a while, and if they ask a question, that’s your cue. You can make a remark that will lead into a conversation about what they need, and what you think they would like.”

“If a salesman doesn’t talk too much, his mind is on the alert—he can get what is on the customer’s mind better.”

“With people who are cranky, or who come from other stores rather discouraged, or angry, or excited, I pretend not to notice that they are in a bad humor. I just keep cool and look pleasant, and show them that I am all attention to see that they get what they want.”

“I try to find out carefully just what the customer wants. If she asks for a henna hat, I don’t just pick up *anything* to show her. I find a shape that will suit her face. If she says she is just looking, I tell her I will be glad to show her what is new. I sometimes ask, ‘Do you want this hat to match your coat or your dress?’ Or I show a contrasting color that will be becoming. I always listen to everything she has to say. And I think all these things show her that I am interested in her.”

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Name four ways of showing courteous interest.
2. Name ten courteous things which salespeople can do to or for each other in the store.
3. Name ten discourteous actions toward each other which can be avoided.
4. How true is this remark: “I can be polite to customers without being polite to store people”?
5. Which would you rather deal with—bright people who are impolite, or people with average brains who are courteous and kind? Why?
6. Arrange in order the following four kinds of people with respect to their satisfactoriness as customers—the best



first, the next best second, the next third, and the worst last:

An intelligent and discourteous person.

A dull and discourteous person.

A bright and courteous person.

A dull and courteous person.

7. Name the eight different methods of showing an intelligent interest in customers.
8. Tell a story illustrating each method.
9. If you were to give yourself a mark of 10 for each of the thirteen methods mentioned in sections 1 and 2, which you use well and consistently, a mark of 5 for those which you use considerably but not particularly well, and a mark of 0 for those which you seldom or never use, what would your total score be? (The perfect score would be 130.)
10. Pick out some other salesperson and reckon his or her score.
11. Get some one else who knows you to grade you (without showing your scoring of yourself as in 9), and see how the two agree. Justify your own scoring if you can.

## CHAPTER X

### INDIFFERENCE AND DISCOURTESY

#### SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

IN any department the best efforts of good salespeople to create an atmosphere of welcome to their customers may be completely spoiled because of the presence of three or four salespeople in the department who are discourteous and indifferent. These may not realize how necessary it is, for the sake of good business as well as for their own happiness, to be courteous to customers. Or they may know, but they may unconsciously keep on doing things to destroy that atmosphere. Or they may care nothing whatever about it.

We are told there are five different ways by which discourtesy and indifference are shown. These are, *first*, by the way the customer is met; *second*, by various actions on the part of the salespeople; *third*, by their neglect or refusal to offer certain courtesies; *fourth*, by their way of showing the goods; and *fifth*, and most serious, by their general bearing.

#### SECTION 2. FIRST IMPRESSIONS

IT often happens that even before the actual sale has started, something has told the customer whether or not she is going to enjoy shopping here. This impression is gained from the following points: Does the first girl whom she approaches look energetic or languid? Would one conclude from the way she holds her head and shoulders, the time it takes her to rise from her chair, the step with which she advances toward the customer, that she is eager to sell goods? If she lacks alertness and interest, slumps in her chair, rises languidly, and starts slowly toward the

customer, any one is justified in feeling that she is indifferent.

If the girl is handling stock behind the counter and seems slouchy and lazy as she paws over the merchandise in a haphazard way, is plainly annoyed at being interrupted, and answers in a gruff, snappy tone, the customer is sure she is not welcome. If the salesperson is happy-go-lucky, and does not seem to care whether she makes a sale or not, if she seems to be on the job just until she has an opportunity to get married, if she yawns in the customer's face, it is certain she is not showing either courtesy or interest.

If a woman looks as if she were just going to ask for information, and probably not buy, they ignore her. They make customers wait for attention until they finish marking or arranging stock. They point to other merchandise instead of taking the customer over to it.

These salespeople have not actually *done* or *said* anything objectionable. It would not be possible to make complaint about any particular thing. The customer could not put her finger on anything, but it is there—the spirit of indifference. It arises solely from the manner of the salespeople.

It is likely that farther on in the department there are efficient and courteous salespeople, but they will never get a chance to show the real spirit of the store as long as one of the discourteous and indifferent kind is there to meet the customer. Indifferent salespeople should always be placed at the back of the department and not at the front.

The following are some examples quoted from the salespeople's reports on cases which they have observed:

"She acts annoyed, or at least bored to death, when the customer talks to her." "They are so snippy it seems to be an effort for them to answer politely."

"I know just how slouchy they act, even in the way they open their salesbooks." "I should like to teach them to do things the way soldiers have to."

"One of the worst things to me is the way the salesgirls will raise their eyebrows and shut their eyes right before the customer to show they are bored and disgusted with her. No matter if they feel they have a right to be disgusted, they should not let the customer see it in their manner."

"The minute they see they are not going to make the sale, they become indifferent or even hateful, as if they wanted to drop the whole thing then and there."

"What I notice often is that while a girl is perfectly willing to wait on the customer, she hates to be asked to take any extra trouble for her. She will go so far and no farther. Indeed, she gets sulky or snappy if put to any special trouble."

### SECTION 3. INDIFFERENT IN ACTIONS

It is discourteous to let customers drift around without offering any information. Salespeople often turn their backs on a customer or actually walk away when they see one coming. If it is a plainly dressed woman or a foreigner, the snub is especially marked, and "they don't care who sees it." They learn to discriminate between customers, and put themselves out to serve only those who they think are likely to buy heavily. When they get into an argument with a dissatisfied customer, they raise their voices so that the whole department knows all about it. If they are new to the store, or don't know the locations thoroughly, they misdirect customers, who then go astray.

**Quarreling.** Every one knows how trying it is for a salesperson who has previously taken trouble to show goods to a customer, without making the sale, to see the customer come in later, with her mind made up to buy, and go to another girl for the sale. It is trying, but that does not justify the way in which some girls show and express their resentment, by actually going over to where the customer stands and saying, "That's my customer—I showed her the goods!"



**Closing time.** There are some salespeople who, as closing time approaches, do not seem able to conceal the fact from the customer on whom they are waiting. They know that they are not supposed to hurry her even if closing hour is near, and that they ought to go on helping her patiently until she is ready to leave. Instead, a great many begin to fidget, put away goods, replace boxes, count their sales, take off aprons, cover counters, and in general display all the marks of impatience. They do everything, apparently, to give the customer the idea that she ought to hurry up. Their eyes, of course, are anywhere but on the goods — most probably on the clock.

**Small courtesies omitted.** What they fail to do may often be just as effective in giving the customer a bad impression of the store or the department. First and foremost, they do not go to meet the approaching customer, or do not rise if they are seated. Instead, they let her come to them. If she does not come to them, but walks around examining goods, they stay where they are instead of going over to ask what they can do for her. They fail to smile, to ask a pleasant question. They do not think to offer her a chair if she is elderly. When they talk to her, they do not look at her,

At the counter they forget to face her during the conversation. They do not make so much effort as may be needed to find the goods wanted, nor do they try hard enough to ascertain what she does want. If they turn to answer a telephone, or to reply to an interruption, they neglect to say, "Excuse me." And when they do make a sale, they forget to thank the customer.

**Showing goods indifferently.** Many salespersons are very pleasant and courteous in meeting customers, and in talking to them, but when it comes to the actual sale, they are in danger of losing the effect of the good impression they have made because they do not realize how the customer is affected by their way of showing their goods.

Taken one by one, the things they do are not very important, perhaps, but together they pile up an unmistakable impression of indifference and inattention that the customer resents.

Discourteous salespeople seem reluctant to show sufficient goods. They produce a few, and put them on the counter with the air of "There, that ought to be enough for anybody!" If asked for others, they grudgingly pull out *one* more. They are unwilling to show their interest by going to the buyer or the head of the stock to find out when something the customer wants will be in. They say, with a careless, lazy manner, "We don't have it now," when it may be in some place that they have not looked, or when it is ordered and on the way.

#### SECTION 4. GROUP DISCOURTESY

A PRACTICE which is very common in some places is not the work of any one individual. Neither can any one person overcome it successfully. But it is so disliked by customers that every salesperson who honestly wants to be courteous should do all he possibly can to reduce it. It might be called "group discourtesy," because it refers to the way salespeople have of whispering about customers, of giving sidelong glances, or disgusted and sympathetic looks, making comments on the cost of the garment being tried on, or indulging in glances of bored contempt. Often one can see a little group of salespeople taking advantage of the few moments when customers are not in to talk about something. This is probably all right *until a customer enters*. But frequently the group does not break up immediately and spring to attention <sup>at once</sup>. And then the customer has to wait while the talk goes on, plainly seen by all the saleswomen, but utterly ignored. By the time she has patiently walked across the floor and separated some one from the "party" and secured a little attention, we can be sure that she is entirely out of humor. A salesperson

will sometimes go up to another who is in the middle of a sale and make audible comments on the goods right before the customer. "I have seen girls turn to each other behind the counter, while the customer stands waiting, to talk about all kinds of private affairs."

#### SECTION 5. WHAT SOME PEOPLE OBSERVE IN THEIR OWN DEPARTMENTS

**From a linen salesman.** "I see salespeople show a piece of goods, and then turn away and fall to talking with another salesperson as if they were no longer interested in the customer and her needs. Or they show only two or three pieces, and then stop. Or they shove some linen in front of a customer, carelessly and impolitely, as though not minding whether or not she sees it right."

**From the ribbon counter.** "The indifferent, detached manner that some girls put on when they sell is the most discourteous thing we see around here. And sometimes the customer has to wait several minutes for attention while two or three salespersons near by keep up their talk about some non-business matter, preferring to finish before they turn to their customer."

**From the boys' clothing.** "Their manner often indicates that they do not care whether the customer buys or not. So they lose the sale unless she is really very anxious to buy — so anxious as to overlook their indifference."

**From the talking machine department.** "The salespeople here don't take enough trouble, sometimes, to hunt up the record that the customer wants. They just say, 'We haven't it.' Or, at other times, they don't pay attention to what the customer is saying. Or they wait, when a customer comes in, and make him come up to them, instead of promptly going forward to offer assistance. Altogether, they give the impression that they are just putting in time in the store, and are not really in earnest about selling."

**From the furniture department.** "Here we find some

salesmen rather inattentive when people prove to be merely lookers — sometimes it is even resentment that they show, rather than just inattention. They won't take time or trouble for any customers except those who they are sure are going to buy then."

**From the house furnishings.** "Well, just this morning, I saw this not very far from me. At the moment there were no customers around, and, as is perfectly permissible in such a case, several of the girls gathered in a group and began talking and laughing. But suddenly in came two young colored girls. They looked at the goods as they came along, and approached the group. But did any of the saleswomen turn and go to them promptly? No. They all kept on talking, just as if there were still nobody to wait on. After a long time, one did manage to detach herself reluctantly and went over to where the two colored girls were looking at tool-chests. And ten minutes later, they had bought an eighty-dollar chest for their father's Christmas present. Yet, had they come in for only an eight-cent pound of nails, and whatever their apparent social class, they should have been approached the instant they entered."

#### SECTION 6. DISCOURTEOUS DON'TS

INDIFFERENT and discourteous salespeople are known by their actions and expressions. The following examples of discourtesy have been noted in various departments in big stores:

**Lazy actions.** "Indifferent salespeople drag themselves around and have no pep. They are reluctant to come forward, and quick to leave." "They don't offer promptly to wait on the customer, but stand and talk among themselves." "They appear not to see a customer approaching, and wait." "They grudgingly leave other girls with whom they are talking and wait on the customer with the appearance of conferring a favor." "They lounge against the counter."



**Pay no attention.** "They pay no attention to what the customer is saying." "They do not give their undivided attention to the customer until the transaction is closed."

**Talk among themselves.** "They carry on unnecessary conversation while the customer waits." "They look upon the customer as an intruder who spoils the story of the night before." "They talk among themselves while waiting on the customer, and to friends passing through the store." "It is discourteous for clerks to be talking about what *he* said or the girl *he* went with, etc. It sounds cheap."

**The customer is a bother.** "She makes the customer feel under obligation in asking to be waited on." "She throws the merchandise at the customer." "She contradicts the customer and tells her that she is at fault." "I once heard a salesgirl say, 'I can't help it if the corset does n't fit; it's your figure.'" "She makes the customer ask to be waited on." "She shows only what is asked for and makes the customer ask for everything she wants to see." "She is grouchy if asked to show inexpensive goods." "She closes the sale without saying, 'Thank you.'"

**Too lazy to show goods.** "She refuses to show goods except in the smallest quantities." "She displays 'just anything' and not the hats suitable to a certain customer." "One girl downstairs made me angry recently. I asked for a fine-mesh veil. She made no effort to show me anything of the kind, but just displayed loose-mesh veils. She had a don't-care-whether-I-wait-on-you-or-not attitude." "A girl should never say, 'We don't have it,' but rather say, 'We don't have it, but here is, etc.'" "If a customer comes into a stationery department, for example, and asks for pound paper, the salesgirl may simply throw down one package on the counter. The customer has to ask about price and quality and beg to be shown some other kind." "They say rudely, 'I have shown you all we have.'"

**Gazing into space.** "They stick their noses in the air and look out of the window." "They look anywhere except

at the customer or the goods." "Looking away from the customer annoys her."

**They don't talk up the merchandise.** "They just throw the goods on the counter and say nothing." "They give the price and nothing else." "They answer yes, or no, without making any suggestions." "They fail to give the selling points."

They powder. They yawn in the customer's face. They chew gum.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What are the five methods of showing discourtesy? Give an illustration of each one.
2. Make a list of every "Don't" you can find in the chapter. How many of them are there?
3. Name the five discourteous actions which make you most furious when you are being waited on.
4. Which of the list in question number 2 are the ones you have to watch in yourself?
5. Name five particular ways in which courtesy can be shown in your department.

## CHAPTER XI

### PATIENCE AND GOOD TEMPER

**Introduction.** One of the most difficult of the salesperson's different problems is the trying customer. If all customers were pleasant and agreeable, the business of selling would be easy, but they are often most exasperating. This makes the situation very difficult because, for the sake of the business, we cannot treat them in the same way that we would in our personal lives outside the store. Exactly how to train ourselves to act for the best interests of the store, of the customers, and of ourselves, becomes very important.

Generally, when people begin to sell, they take everything as if it were personal. Just as when they were boys and girls they became angry at any one who became angry at them, so before they have gained selling experience they become irritated with customers who are irritated with them.

But just as mothers and fathers learn to make excuses for their children and to look for signs of tiredness or worry, so experienced salespeople become more and more philosophical and divide the disagreeable customers into three classes: those who are angry at them personally, those who are just naturally disagreeable, and those who have some special cause for irritation in conditions outside or inside the store.

While it is true that some of the expert salespeople say they were born with good tempers and a large stock of patience, or were taught at home to control their tempers while quite young, other experts confess to healthy tempers, upon which they have had to work very hard in order to get them under control. The experience of these people who have had to develop methods of controlling their tempers

are the most valuable to us, and so we have collected them in this chapter.

In general there are ten ways of controlling temper in use by good salespeople.

(1) **The right attitude.** In learning to control our tempers and to develop patience with disagreeable customers, it is absolutely necessary to begin with ourselves. For very often the reasons why we lose our tempers do not lie so much in the surroundings as in our own natural irritability. It is not caused by other people; it is caused by ourselves. So the first thing we have to do is to make sure that our own attitude is right. This can be done in a number of ways, as shown by the following suggestions:

“ I sometimes say to the other girls, ‘ Don’t blame the other fellow all the time. Turn the searchlight on yourself, and take inventory. It is cowardly always to blame other people. Customers often have reason to be disagreeable because of the way things are put up to them.’ ”

Another saleswoman says: “ You can say to yourself, ‘ If I’m going to have a good day, I must not get discouraged or impatient; I must be happy. The next customer will buy if this one won’t.’ ”

“ The other girls at my counter are so nice that they hardly ever make me impatient, so I can stand it better when the customers are trying. I make myself remember the good things about my job.”

The idea of remembering good things about your job is well expressed by one assistant buyer who says: “ I tell my girls, no matter how aggravating or critical a customer may seem, just keep smiling—not a fixed smile, but a real, genuine one. Also I tell them to get busy and see what is wrong with themselves. Don’t carry a grouch all day. Begin to be thankful—

“ for your good position,

“ which is assured you,

“ for your nice salary,



“a comfortable, warm store to work in,

“nice people to work with, and

“a whole season without any trouble.”

(2) **For the good of the business.** One very definite thing we must remember every hour of the day is that our words and acts while we are working must all be thought of as having an influence upon the store's business and the good will of its customers toward it. Once employed as salespeople, we cannot let any word, tone, or act interfere with this, even though the cost is high. “It is a business proposition purely,” one salesman says. “I am here in the interests of the store. If I am to help myself I must keep my temper.” “That is what I am here for,” says a young woman in linens, “to wait on her smilingly no matter how much time she takes. As long as I am here to sell merchandise, a part of my job is to be nice to every kind of customer.” “I have made up my mind,” says another salesman who has given a great deal of thought to the business side of temper-control, “that it is my duty to put in so many hours in the store every day. It is much better for myself and everybody else if I keep in a good humor and am patient, and I can do this if I remember that all the people who come into the store are customers of my company, and that it would not be right for me to do anything that would cause them to stop coming to the store. I reason that if I am patient to-day, even though the customer doesn't buy, she is likely to come in again, and will probably come to me the next time. And finally, I know that the better I treat them, the more customers I will have, and that by doing this I am making myself of value to the store, and will thereby increase my salary. In addition, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I have done my work well, and have made friends.”

Finally, one efficient saleswoman says with regard to the personal side of temper-control: “No matter what she says, don't you take it personally. Forget yourself

and think that you are here for one purpose — to sell and to please the customer. It is not an insult to you if she does n't buy."

(3) **Feeling fit.** So closely are our bodies and our nerves bound together that the salesperson who tries to be patient with an irritating customer doubles his difficulty if his physical condition is not at the top-notch. He must practice sensible rules of living every day, the right kind of diet at the right hours, and proper rest and hygiene. This is very clearly brought out by several salespeople, who say: "Girls who go out to dances and parties every night lose sleep and can't help being irritable. Good health is very important." "Keeping one's self in good health will keep one good-tempered also." "Any person who is n't in good health can't handle any kind of customer — and those in good health can handle every kind." "People who serve the public must keep regular hours. A good night's sleep makes them physically fit." "I never could dance all night and feel fit to work the next day, and it's no wonder the girls who go out every night are cross and snappy every morning."

(4) **Actions that calm.** Some salespeople have found it helpful, when trying to keep their tempers in the face of unreasonableness, to perform certain physical actions that calm their nerves. They walk away a little behind the counter until they can cool off. The suggestions of the salespeople are so interesting that a number of them will be quoted: "When people irritate me by unreasonableness, I go away a little. By this time I feel better, and probably the customer does too." "I walk over to some other table and say to myself: 'I know I should not be impatient. I am going to do this thing right.' Then I go back to the customer feeling better." "Sometimes I have to excuse myself to collect my mind. I walk through the next aisle to renew my courage. Usually this walk calms me down." "Sometimes a customer is so

trying I have to go into the buyer's office and say, 'I'm just about crazy trying to please that woman.' By that time I have cooled off enough to go out and say, 'Well, now here is something different. Let's try it.' " "At times I take a moment when I appear to be looking for suitable hats, but I am really cooling off."

(5) **The bitter with the sweet.** Salespeople find it of great assistance in getting over trying experiences with a disagreeable customer to think that the next one may be fine. "I say to myself: 'She will not be here long, and there will be some one else soon who will be so nice you'll soon forget. It is all in the day's work.' " "If it were not for the cranky ones we would n't half appreciate the nice ones."

(6) **The funny side.** Many fortunate salespeople handle their tempers by seeing the humor of a situation. "I find," says one, "that almost any situation which is trying to the patience has its funny side, and thinking about this helps the temper." "I take things as a joke," says another; "I see how amusing or silly a certain incident is rather than get angry at it." "I save unreasonable remarks as choice stories to repeat to the other girls or at home, and this makes the work seem more pleasant." "I was just on the point of making a sharp reply the other day when I happened to think of something funny that I had read a little while before about people who lose their tempers, and it made me laugh instead of losing mine."

(7) **Don't argue.**

"Never argue or you will never get rid of her."

"Sit tight and say nothing."

"It does n't pay to get mad, for they jump on you then."

"Refuse to argue; it makes them excited."

"If you are calm, you will be master."

"If you answer back, you will soon have a fight on your hands."

"Keep quiet, let her talk her disagreeableness out."

"Say as little as possible while they are angry. If you talk, you may show your temper. When they are through, you can put some question that will get to the bottom of the difficulty, and perhaps in a few minutes you can straighten them out."

(8) **The selling game.** Many salespeople get away from their personal feelings by looking upon the winning of the customer as a game. As one salesperson says: "I look upon selling as a game. If I make the sale, I win. I find a satisfaction in matching my wits against the customer's. By winning I increase my sales, but if I lose my patience, I am likely to lose my sale, which affects my salary and my bonus." A number of people set out with the determination to make a customer agreeable, and when they do that they feel that they have won. "As soon as I approach the customer I make up my mind to sweeten her disposition. I just determine she will be agreeable before she leaves. So instead of losing my temper, I just go to work with her patiently." "The meaner they are, the nicer I make myself be. I nearly fall over myself trying to be pleasant and courteous. And by the time they leave they are often in a pretty good humor."

(9) **Making allowances for the customer.** Sometimes it is easier to retain patience with the cross customer if you put yourself in her place and imagine what she has been through to make her so short-tempered to-day. Perhaps she is irritated about something at home. "I look on the angry man or woman the same way the doctor looks on the patient, as some one to study and cure by any method he can." "I think to myself that perhaps the customer has left the baby sick at home, or missed the car, or had a great deal of trouble getting waited on during the morning. I try to remember that I would feel the same under the same circumstances, so I develop sympathy, which helps me." A furniture salesman says: "People don't buy goods in my department every day, and if they look around and



put off purchasing, one cannot blame them. So, when they waste my time, and appear to be fussy, I just remember that this is a very important occasion for them and help them all I can. Perhaps they will not buy any more furniture for two or three years." It helps to remember that "the customer may not be in shopping humor." "She may say, 'I don't like that quality. Isn't it awfully coarse?' or, 'That is altogether too high.' But I show the goods, and don't quarrel. Perhaps in a day or two she comes back in a shopping humor and buys the same article she criticized before. Some people try you to the limit, as if they wanted to see how much you could stand. Then, when they come in again, they say, 'You had an awful lot of patience with me the last time. I was very nervous that day.' "

(10) **Showing goods.** Work is the best thing to make one forget anger or impatience. "I simply forget," says one salesperson, "how long I have had the customer and so keep on showing goods and making suggestions." "I pay attention to what she has asked for and tell her everything she may want to know about it. I never let her know I am cross."

**Keeping your self-respect.** While salespeople feel that it is usually better to make no answer to the rude criticisms of the customer, they believe that there are times when it is just as well to object firmly and politely to the criticism. "If I have a snippy customer, then I try my hardest to be nice. I once had a customer, however, who said, 'That dress is a rag. I would n't wear it.' Then I said, 'No, madam, it is n't a rag, but I have one here you may like better.' I tried to be patient, and before she left she bought a dress and apologized for calling the other one a rag." "The customer came in to exchange a pair of gloves, and because I did n't give her just what she wanted she thought I had something I did n't want to show her. And, though she was very disagreeable, and though I fixed her up as

well as possible, she still doubted me. Then I said firmly, 'No, I have n't anything nearer than this. I have shown you all I have. Of course, I am sorry you feel the way you do because I have tried to do the best I could.' She was very snippy and disagreeable when she went out. Some days later she came back and recalled the circumstances to my mind and said, 'I was very unreasonable with you, and I am ashamed.' But I had already decided that she was not well that morning, and had made up my mind to forget all about it. I need much grace on the point of controlling my temper, because I am very nervous." "It is hard to listen when a customer slanders the store or your department, but I ease my temper by remembering that there are cranky characters in the world just as there are nice ones."

#### THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Name the ten methods of temper-control.
2. Do you have a temper? If so, which of these methods have you used and what other ones have you found useful?
3. How do you get yourself into the right attitude?
4. Recall and describe a time when you became irritable because you did not feel fit.
5. Are you able to "see the funny side"? What friends of yours are able to? How do they do it? What would you tell other people to do to learn to see the funny side?
6. Do you rise above the customer and look on her as a game to see if you can make her a bit easier to get along with? If so, how did you learn to do it? Ask your friends how they learned.
7. Tell three stories of customers who had good reason to be out of humor because of what happened in or out of the store.

## CHAPTER XII

### REMEMBERING NAMES AND FACES

#### SECTION I. WHY REMEMBER NAMES?

THE greatest single aid to building up a following is the ability to remember customers' names and faces. For some deep psychological reason people feel that if a comparative stranger remembers their names he is deeply interested in them. This makes them feel friendly toward him and gives them confidence in him. Sometimes this is so powerful that the person who remembers has greater influence over the other person than conditions warrant.

We know of many cases where even very prominent people have been surprised and delighted because a salesman remembered their names when they had not expected him to.

Salespeople remember names, then, because they like to, and also because they are sure it pays. It makes customers feel at home and shows that the salesman is interested. Consequently, the atmosphere of the sale improves and more goods are purchased. One salesman says: "It is always embarrassing to me to have people fail to remember me when they should. So I determined to remember my customers' names and I have trained myself until this has become comparatively easy for me." Another one says: "It makes me very happy to notice the pleasure that shows on the faces of the customers whom I have not seen for a year when I say, 'How are you? Do you feel better than the last time I saw you?' or some other remark to show that I remember them personally. They are surprised and cannot understand how I remember. They always come to me again." Another salesperson remarks: "Learning to remember customers' names makes my work

more interesting in a human way. I suppose it is my interest in the human side of people that has made me want to keep their names and faces in my mind."

So, we see that names should be remembered because it is good business, because in a human way it makes the customer feel happy, and in a personal way is a decided pleasure to the salesman himself.

## SECTION 2. WHO ARE REMEMBERED?

**The second visit.** Among the thousands who pass through a great store, not every one can be remembered, so we find there are a number of things which decide whose names shall be picked out and filed in the memory. The most common rule is this: *When you recognize the customer as coming back to you the second time, try to remember the name.* It is clearly impossible to get the names of everybody on whom you wait, because many of them are casual customers whom you may never see again. But if, for any reason, a customer returns to you, you know, in the first place, that she is likely to be a regular customer and will be coming in again, or, that possibly for some reason she likes to have you wait upon her. Of course, if the customer asks for you, very special effort should be made to remember the name.

Some people remember faces very much better than others, and it is possible that the salesperson may have the same customer coming back again and again and not remember anything about it. But even if he has returned a number of times without our recognizing him, and then turns up again and we do recognize him, we should then be sure to try to get his name.

**Special marks.** The disagreeable customer is remembered by some so that they will know how to handle her the next time she calls. Indeed, in some departments the disagreeable customer is remembered not so much to know how to handle her as to know how to get out of her



way. It seems to be the opinion of many even-tempered expert salespeople that it is easy sometimes to get on the right side of these disagreeable people, and when you do, they are rather easier to sell to than many more agreeable customers.

Some salespeople notice striking facts about the customer which attract their attention. One says she remembers people who are well-groomed and neat and whose appearance she likes. Others remember the kind ones particularly. Others remember them by their voices, particularly if they are pleasant. Sometimes also the name is striking or unusual. Still other salespeople connect the name with some unusual thing that happened while the sale was on.

### SECTION 3. HOW TO MEMORIZE THE NAME

**Getting the name.** The most common method of getting the name is from the sales-check when it is filled out. Occasionally salespeople catch the name from other salespeople in the department.

**Rules.** Some people say that they have no rules for memorizing names. Possessed of good memories, they believe they "just remember." But even they go through certain actions. *The first thing to do is to concentrate on the name and connect it with the customer's face.* Some make the connection by saying to themselves, "I will remember you." They look the customer squarely in the face, they tie together the name, face, and circumstances, so that when she comes again the three will spring into the mind at once. That is to say, when the customer comes in again and they see her face, they recall her name, and also, perhaps, the circumstances of the purchase she made before. It is not a problem of name only, as, for instance, to be able to answer the question, "Have you ever waited on a man named Garretson?" But rather: "If a man called you on the telephone to leave an order, and said he

was Garretson, could you see his face the minute he gave his name? ” Or, “ If the man named Garretson walked into this department and you turned suddenly and saw him, could you call him by name the instant you looked at his face? ” These are the tests: face from name, name from face. And the direct, observant look is the first step.

All agree that it is easier to recall faces than names. They recognize customers who come back and can often recall the circumstances without being able to recall their names. Fortunately, remembering the face often serves almost as well as remembering the name, in showing the friendliness and particular attention which helps so much in making the sale.

Some people *look closely* at the name and try to remember and get a “ mental photograph ” of it. Others *repeat the name to themselves as they write it*. They may repeat it only once, or several times, depending upon how easy it is for them to memorize. They also *think about the name and the person after she leaves*. Others repeat the name *aloud* instead of under the breath. Still others *write the name* again after they have written it on the sales-check, and the second writing may be enough. In fact, some people can never remember the name until they write it and see it. It is very important to *use the name several times*, as soon as it has been learned. As they talk to the customer such salespeople say, “ I hope, Mrs. Wilson, that you will come in again ”; or, “ I hope that you will like this, Mrs. Wilson,” etc. Some of those keep the names of their customers in a book and study this when going home on the car, or at odd moments; they *run over the list of names*, and try to connect each name with its face. One salesman has a list of names with some peculiar mark opposite each which will help him to remember, and from time to time he runs over this list.

In addition to the foregoing rules for connecting the name and face, a good many salespeople have rules for

connecting the customers with their actions. Some people associate them *with what they purchase*. Others *compare* them *with other people whom they know*, saying, "She reminds me of So-and-So." Others report that if they look the customer in the face while serving her and have her name and face in mind, it makes a more lasting impression. Some remember the *build*, the color of the *hair*, the *face*, *chin*, *nose*, etc., whether stout or thin, blonde or brunette, the features, or beautiful eyes. The *voice* and tone are remembered by others. Some identify people by the *customers they shopped with* — "Oh, yes, she came in with Mrs. Brown last time." Little attention is paid to *dress* because styles change so often.

**Memory books.** Many salespeople keep memory books in which they write the names of their regular customers. They do not, of course, put every name in this book, but reserve it for people who they feel belong particularly to them. (Selling etiquette seems to rule that a person becomes our regular customer after she has come back to us twice or oftener, or when she asks particularly for our services.) These books contain the full names of the customers indexed alphabetically by the last name, together with street address and telephone number. They use these partly as a help in remembering the names, and partly as a help in telephoning or writing them when something has arrived which the customer has been interested in getting.

**Rules.** Six rules summarize what we have been saying.

1. Memorize the name of each customer who comes back to you a second time.

2. Repeat the name, write it, say it aloud, concentrate on it, keep it in a book, and set yourself the stunt of connecting the face with it.

3. Use the name frequently in talking to the customer.

4. Try to notice peculiarities and differences, compare with friends, connect with purchases. Build up your own systems of association.

5. When you have forgotten the name, use your brains to find a clue.
6. Keep a memorandum book listing your own customers.

#### SECTION 4. DIFFICULT CASES

**Forgetting a regular customer.** When a regular customer's name is forgotten, salespeople do not like to let her know this, and so use a good many devices.

"If I forget her name I do not let her know because she will be cross; so I *wait* until she has left and ask some other salesperson."

"When I forget the name I go through the alphabet until I come to the letter with which her name begins."

"If I forget her name I *greet her cordially* and later manage to get her name without her knowing it."

"I usually try to connect each customer with the goods she buys or is interested in. When she returns, I greet her with, 'Did you find that your blue dress made up satisfactorily?' Thus, by omitting the usual 'madam' by which strangers are addressed, and by showing that I remember her, I can often make her overlook the omission of her name."

"Sometimes customers look or act so alike that I cannot tell them apart. When either one comes in, I don't use her name until something in the sale brings it back to me."

*Example:* She did not know whether the customer's name was Mrs. Robinson or Mrs. Thompson.

*Customer:* "Any bargains to-day?"

*Miss X:* "Yes, we have some reduced sheets in large sizes."

*Customer:* "But you know I got sheets ten days ago."

*Miss X:* "Oh, I thought that perhaps you were needing more."

(The purchase of ten days before brought back the correct name.)



"If I forget a regular customer's name, I usually say, 'I'll have to take your address over again.' Usually she gives the name, too. If she does not, I hunt it up in my address book."

#### SECTION 5. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SALESPeOPLE

"I LOOK each customer square in the face while the sale is going on. I note any peculiarities, such as the shape of the mouth or nose, pleasant wrinkles about the eyes, freckles or moles, and individual ways of brushing the hair. Once a customer has gone, I take a second to try to call up in my mind a perfect picture of the face, so that I may know it again."

"I try to impress their faces on my mind as well as their height and weight."

"I have no particular rule for remembering names. I notice whether they are thin, stout, short, or tall; I also notice their general expression and whether they are plain, or attractive, or very beautiful, beautiful eyes, etc." "If I remember the name at first, I never forget, and if I forget it once, it is the hardest thing to remember."

"When I wait on the customer once, I say to myself, 'That is Mrs. Blank.'"

"I have a book in which I keep names and addresses of my customers; I could not trust my memory. If the customer seems good, I take her name and address. These are mostly charges, but I get the names of some cash-sends. Of course you can't take everybody's name, because you can't tell whether they will be good customers or will come back again. If you know them, it is always well to mention their names."

"I keep a memory book with all the names of my regular customers. My last customer was added to my memory book in this way: She had been waited on by me occasionally, but about six weeks ago she wanted some material which it is difficult to obtain and I did a nice job for her.

Since, she has come back for several things, so I have entered her in my book as one of my regular customers."

"I note and try to get the names of people who buy many things, or buy what I personally like or think refined and in good taste." "I use the names as much as possible. People like to have their names used unexpectedly. I remember initials by devices such as d. f. (dear friend)."

"It has been my experience that it is easier to remember their names. If I wait upon a customer once, I generally remember her the next time I see her. So I have made a practice of carrying a small book in which I enter the name and address, and by looking through the book I can generally pick out the name of the customer. Of course, this cannot be done with all customers waited upon, but it is a great help in remembering names and addresses of customers upon whom I generally wait and who rather expect me to remember them. Of course, if there is any doubt about getting the correct name, I always ask the customer. I also am sometimes aided by connecting their names with some one else of the same name whom I know, or with places or objects."

"I write the name and look at the face and notice shape (if round or fat or short or thin), coloring of hair and eyes. Teeth I always notice first. I connect name with similar name. I remembered one woman by thinking of lumber, because her husband was in the lumber business. I do not keep a list of names. I just remember."

"Some names and faces I naturally remember; others I say to myself as I look at the person. Every time I see her I think of her name. If I can't remember it, I ask some one."

"If a woman has a pleasant voice, I can remember her name if I can find it out, either in a charge or by asking some one. If I can see her hands, I can also remember her. If I speak the name or make an effort to repeat it to myself, I don't forget it."

“Yes, I really try to remember them. When I wait on them, I look at them quite a bit. I especially notice their expression. I notice whether it’s pleasing or displeasing. Of course, even if it is displeasing, I can’t always go by it; appearances are sometimes deceitful. But I notice if they look very sober or even look cross.”

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Which do you remember better, names or faces?
2. What are your chief difficulties in remembering people?
3. What do you do when you particularly want to remember a person?
4. Repeat from memory the six rules given for memorizing names of customers.
5. If you cannot recall a customer’s name when you know you ought to, what do you do to cover it up? How do you lead the customer to remind you of it?
6. What tricks do people use for bringing back customers’ names which they have forgotten?
7. Begin to use a book (if you do not already use one) in which to keep the names of your regular customers.
8. What ought you to have in the book for each customer besides the name? Why?

## CHAPTER XIII

### HOW TO HANDLE TWO CUSTOMERS AT ONCE

#### SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

**The problem.** We have found from investigation of customers in one city that, in the main, they prefer not to have the salesperson wait upon them and some one else at the same time. Our figures show the following facts: of 403 customers replying, 231, or 58 per cent, object to a salesperson's dividing her attention between the customer and a second person; 23 per cent think it is satisfactory; and 20 per cent are indifferent to the plan. So, while it is not impossible to wait on two customers at the same time, the job needs to be handled with very great care if both are to be satisfied.

There are, of course, many salespeople who think it cannot be done, and who never try to do it. One consequence of this is that when the customers are kept waiting too long, they become impatient, dissatisfied with the service, and may leave without buying. Another consequence is that the salesperson has fewer sales in her book at the end of the day because she has taken her customers one after another instead of trying to double up. So the customer loses time, the store loses sales, and the salesperson sells less merchandise.

Just how to handle this is a matter of some importance, especially during the Christmas season and during sales. A woman who can keep several customers busy and interested at once is of real value to her department. Since it is a thing which can be learned, a number of suggestions are in order.

**Call another salesman.** The first thing to do is to steer



clear of the difficulty, if possible, by calling another salesperson to look after the second customer. This is absolutely imperative in some departments. "Our merchandise," says one man, "sometimes takes a long time to sell, and we simply cannot handle two different customers at the same time if they want totally different things. We either call another salesperson, or, if everybody is busy, we ask the second customer to sit down and wait. If we are pleasant and courteous about it, she does n't seem to mind." The salesperson, however, must be quite honest with himself and not inconvenience a customer by having her wait *if* he can take her on with a slightly greater expenditure of trouble and thought.

**If all the salespeople are busy.** But in many cases there is no other salesperson to whom we can pass along the second customer, and then we have to handle her ourselves. In case the customer is one of our regulars, she will usually prefer to wait. Otherwise, we should begin to give her attention at the same time we are waiting on the first. If we see, however, that this causes inconvenience to the first, it will have to be given up, for the first customer really has the right to our time. This will not often happen if we handle it right. "Of course," says one, "you run the risk of offending the woman you are already waiting on, but I don't have much trouble that way because I always say, very politely, 'Do you mind if I take a moment to see what this lady wants? I would appreciate it, because there does n't seem to be anybody else to wait on her,' and she usually says 'Yes' very nicely."

Indeed, another woman testifies: "I can wait on three or even four if I have to, at noon, when some of the girls are out to lunch, or around Christmas time when we each carry a heavy load. It used to be that I did n't dare to tackle more than two, but, now that I know how, I find it rather fun to keep several going at once, all satisfied that they are being attended to and all buying. My big trouble is in

keeping the sales-checks and packages from getting mixed up."

**In different departments.** We are told that in such merchandise as umbrellas, handkerchiefs, notions, ribbons, and such, where the goods are mostly out on the counters for choice, matching, etc., it is not hard to keep two sales going at once, and where there are only a few types of goods shown, such as among the ranges and heaters, it is possible to attend to two or more customers at once because so often several customers happen to want practically the same thing, and the same selling talk does for all.

Elsewhere, however, it takes some planning. In the shoe department the salesman has to exercise some skill in selling to two customers at once without seeming to neglect either, and in keeping straight in his mind the various requirements of each. In the dress department it seems to be tried very seldom, since apparently a customer who is buying a dress usually wishes the undivided attention of her saleswoman.

**How to divide your attention between two.** It has been suggested that there is not great difficulty when two customers want virtually the same thing, with variations only in size or color. But when different types of merchandise are asked for, it becomes a real problem, and usually two can scarcely be handled as one customer. This is particularly true if the goods required by the second are at some distance from those which the first customer is examining. In fact, in that case it would be impossible for one to handle them together because doing this involves keeping them near each other. The second cannot usually be given so much attention as the first, and does not expect it. What we are really doing is to delay the second interview a little, while occupying the second customer's attention in order to please her without offending the first.

**Keep the second busy.** This can often be done by quickly placing before her several articles of the kind you see her

looking at. If she is not looking at anything in particular, it is possible to lay before her a few of the newer or more popular goods, or to bring out something that has been advertised for that day, some specials or some reduced articles. The important thing is to keep her happy until you can wait on her, and of course as you lay the goods before her, you will say something brief and pleasant in connection with what you show. Then, as the first sale progresses, you can throw a word or two to the second customer which will let her see that you will give her your attention in a moment, and yet not seem to hurry the first customer.

**A quick sale.** During a sale a second customer may want some small thing in a hurry. She can sometimes be attended to at once if we are careful to excuse ourselves to the first customer in the fashion stated above. This should not be attempted unless the customer knows exactly what she wants and is able to tell you briefly what she wants.

This plan fits in particularly well where the earlier customer finds that she must take some time to decide and either is too considerate to keep you away from others, or prefers being left alone for a few moments. "I have often had customers tell me to go away and wait on others while they are making up their minds. Then I keep my eye on them so as to be prepared to make out the sale when they are ready." Sometimes, also, the second customer knows so well what she wants that she can herself pick out the goods from what is shown so that all you have to do is write out the check.

In short, if you can keep talking and showing to both at once, either put most of your attention on the first, while directing the second to goods that she may examine and think about, or else turn to the second while the first is deciding and get this short sale out of the way first.

**Doing it with your whole heart.** The sum of the matter is that the problem can be handled in one way or another

if only the salesperson goes about it with conscious effort to do the wise thing. She needs to think about it, to try this plan and that, and to put her heart into this as into other selling problems. None is so difficult that brains and courteous interest in the customer cannot overcome it.

## SECTION 2. TWO FRIENDS SHOPPING TOGETHER

IN section 1 we have been talking about how the salesperson can at one time wait upon two customers who are strangers to each other. In this section we shall discuss methods of handling customers who are shopping together.

**Complications.** In general the situation is always complicated by the companion of the customer who is doing the shopping for herself. In ordinary cases the salesperson has only the customer to deal with, and when she has made up her mind, the sale is completed. But when the customer has a companion, her thoughts are disturbed and distracted so that she cannot think so clearly, and her companion may introduce suggestions to make her change her mind.

Sometimes this changing of the mind has a good result, and sometimes an unfortunate one, depending upon whether the companion's remarks lead the customer to make a better selection or a poorer one. It is a hard problem at best. As one woman says: "When you have just about got your customer's mind made up to take a thing, her friend walks over and says, 'Oh, no, you don't want *that* at all!' Then you have your work to do all over again!" "We all know the friend," says a woman in waists, "who queers what we know the customer ought to have and tries to persuade her to go to another store. Then, of course, we have to start our selling talk and answer her objections all over again. But I have had it happen," says this saleswoman, "that after the sale is lost and they go off to another store, the customer comes back the next day without the friend to buy what I wanted her to buy."



**When they mix in.** In general, the companion may be an aid, or a hindrance, or, in some few cases, may not affect the sale one way or another. The companion has no influence if she pays no attention to the sale or if her mind follows along with the mind of the customer. Such a situation often arises where the companion is of the well-bred type who makes no remarks about the goods unless definitely asked to do so, or where, if she is asked to do so, she feels that after all it is the customer who must suit herself and she takes care not to be too positive in her own opinions.

The companion is an aid to the customer when she helps **her** to make a better selection. This is particularly the case when the companion has better taste than the customer and shows good judgment in her recommendations.

**When they argue.** The companion is a hindrance to the sale if she objects to the selection and opinions of the customer. She is still more of a hindrance when she is "bossy" and tries to make the customer take what *she* wants rather than what the customer herself wants. It has to be recognized that even when the "bossy" companion is shopping with the indecisive customer who needs to lean upon somebody, results are likely to be bad unless the situation is carefully handled. For, when the customer gets home and away from the domineering influence of the companion, she may change her mind and be entirely dissatisfied.

**How to handle the situation.** There are several suggestions made by experienced salespeople. *First*, some salespeople sell to both. The saleswoman who, when asked how to handle two women shopping together, advised us to ignore the friend entirely, finds herself disagreeing with almost every other one of our salespeople. The companion cannot be ignored except in those very rare cases where she says nothing; women are not of that sort when they go shopping. So we must admit the friend to the sale, and if we are wise we encourage her to talk and share in the

general conversation. It is particularly necessary to include the companion if the customer seems to have brought her along to help decide. This does not mean that the customer is to be ignored, but rather that when the companion makes a remark it should be replied to in general as though the customer had made it. When the customer makes a remark, we pay attention to her, and equally when the companion makes a statement, we reply to her in the same natural way. The selling situation has become three-cornered.

This attitude is necessary because our business is not simply *to sell*, but *to sell and to satisfy*, and to satisfy not only the customer, but also to try to satisfy the companion. While it is of more importance to satisfy the customer, the certainty of keeping her satisfied is ensured if the companion is also enthusiastic; while, if the companion doubts the wisdom of the sale, she will throw cold water upon the enthusiasm of the customer when they get to talking things over after the sale.

In the *second* place, it is important that we watch to see who is the leader. We have to watch for this during the sale because it is only by watching that we get clues as to exactly what the pair of them want, and what the arguments are which seem to affect the decision. Here sizing-up will show us whether the companion or the customer is the stronger character, and which of the two has the better taste and judgment.

While it is a serious mistake to lay down the rule that "the salesperson should size-up the pair to see which has the stronger will-power and sell to *her*" — as is sometimes advised — it does get the sale over more quickly. But it does not help the customer to stay satisfied if she has been forced into buying something by the "bossy" companion and the strong-minded salesperson. While superficially it may make it possible for the saleswoman to wait upon more customers on that day, in the end it works harm because

the customer is not completely "sold" and may not "stay sold."

Yet many cases arise in which the salesperson feels that the companion's judgment is better than that of the customer, and the companion's opinion can then be used to bring the customer to the right decision. This is very well put by one saleswoman who says: "I have no hesitation about using the opinion of the companion to make the sale, if I see that the customer is not very sure about the proper thing to do. On the other hand, if I see that she has her mind pretty strongly made up, I never use the companion as a means to argue her out of her decision." Another salesperson says: "I like to use the companion's opinion to convince the customer, if I know that her judgment and taste and experience are the better of the two. When she agrees with me, then I work so that the two of us will convince the customer. On the other hand, if she does n't agree with the customer and me, I do my honest best to bring her to our way of thinking, provided it does n't take too long. If the companion raises a good many objections, I believe it is wise to let her state them freely. The moment I see she is going to get into the conversation and perhaps make the sale harder, I let her state all her opinions and bring out all her objections as soon as possible. Then I know where I stand, and can see what I have to overcome." If we know our merchandise well and believe in it, we can turn our answers to the companion's objections into actual arguments for the goods. At any rate, the sooner she gets all her ideas expressed for and against the goods, the better it is for us.

**Arguments.** In cases of argument, sometimes the situation becomes rather delicate and a good deal of feeling is sometimes aroused. In that case we are strongly advised that it is a mistake to lose our tempers even though the situation is at times very exasperating. This means that the salesperson holds the key to the situation, because in a

triangular argument the saleswoman can relieve the tension by either ignoring the argument and turning the discussion to a fresh topic, or answering objections and settling difficulties by a pleasant and tactful remark.

A number of little devices are used to settle the argument. Some salespeople appeal to another salesperson for an opinion one way or another; or they call in the buyer or the assistant, or they bring out still more merchandise in the hope of hitting on something that will please everybody. In this latter case a number of suggestions are made.

A saleswoman in the silverware department says: "If two patterns in silver are equally desirable, I take the condition of the stock into consideration. For instance, the other day two women liked different patterns. One was just as nice as the other, but as I suspected they were going to buy more of the same silver later on, and as we had teaspoons in one pattern, but not in the other, I recommended the one in which there was a complete line, and succeeded in selling it."

If, however, we were selling hats, dresses, and wearing apparel, and if, of the two articles which are under discussion, one is unmistakably the one which ought to be bought, the situation cannot be handled in that way. Rather, if the woman who is to wear it is not sure that it will be just the right thing, and lacks confidence and decision and refuses it against the advice of others, the salesperson's business is to reënforce the arguments of the companion and persuade her to take it. If, instead, she likes it and the opposition is from the companion and they cannot agree, we have a more delicate situation, in which the device of showing something else or of getting the opinion of the buyer may be of use. In such cases it is sometimes found quite useful to do as one shoe salesman does. He says: "I go off for a minute or two to let the two men talk it over. When I return, if the friend still does n't like what the customer likes, then I go and get what the friend ad-



vises and try to swing the customer over to that. I try to see which pair is really the right thing for him to have. I may explain to the friend, for instance, that the customer cannot wear the style he suggests because of a tendency to flat-foot, and that what I recommend will give him more comfort."

**Summary.** In brief, then, where the customer and the companion do not agree, it is wise to control one's temper, talk pleasantly, and keep the boat from rocking. We should be anxious to make the best kind of sale and side with one or the other, according as our judgment dictates, and always to remember that after all the customer is buying the article and paying for it. It is particularly important to give the two a chance to talk the matter over and settle it between themselves; but where they cannot do that, the salesperson should have no hesitancy in supporting one or the other, whichever seems wise.

Some salespeople try to avoid argument by the use of diplomacy. For instance, it may be dangerous (but it need not be, if handled courteously and with a humorous smile) to say, "While in a way I agree with you, still — she likes the other, and after all, *she* is the one to wear it. Don't you think we had better let her take it?" Or, it is sometimes possible to get the companion's mind off the sale by showing her something which you think she might want to buy herself. Then, if you can get her to look at it and try it on, you can deal with the customer without interference; and there is, besides, the possibility of making two sales instead of only one.

Some of the salespeople's own words reënforce what has just been said:

"I think you have to be careful to sell the right thing, no matter who seems to be boss — not necessarily the thing that is wanted by the one who does the most talking, but the thing that will satisfy the person who is going to use it. I have seen mothers try to influence

their daughters to take clothes that were all right from the older woman's point of view, in durability and all that, but what the young girls want is *style*. So I say that, as they have to wear the clothes, let them have what they want, though it may not be what their mothers or I would want to buy. When two women shop together, I don't pay so much attention to the matter of deciding which is running the sale, as I do to finding out the best thing for the one it is intended for. And the same way with husbands and wives. Please both when you can, but try to sell the right thing, no matter how much they argue."

"If I am going to have to deal with the undecided, wavering kind of customer, I'd much rather have somebody else come in with her. It makes the sale easier. As soon as I find out that she is that kind, I sell to the other one. No use of trying to persuade the first woman, for in the end she'll give up to what her friend says, anyhow."

"I always let them talk it over freely, trying not to interrupt. Often, that is what the second person has been brought along for. The more they talk, the better idea I get of what I ought to sell them."

"You have to stand by your own real opinion. If you think a suit looks well on a person, and say so, stick to it, no matter what the other one says. If you keep changing back and forth, neither of them will have any confidence in you."

### SECTION 3. MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

**Usually the daughter is the one to please.** The department may well count itself fortunate in which it can be said, as it was said in the house-furnishings, "Mothers and daughters who shop here usually work in harmony"; for this is too seldom the case. Those of us who are called upon to sell to this combination find excellent material in it for a study of human nature. We notice very clearly the contrast between the taste and ideas of the younger and the older

generations. We also get a very clear idea of the kind of discipline that the present generation exercises upon its young. One wonders whether thirty or forty years ago the storekeeper was often obliged to determine, between the mother and the sixteen-year-old daughter whose dress is being bought, "which is boss." Yet this is what has to be decided nowadays in making sales to a mother and daughter, even if the merchandise is intended for the mother! In other days, we are told, the daughter was "seen but not heard." She allowed her mother to exercise her own mature taste and rich experience in deciding what should be bought. To-day we do well to find out first what the daughter wants, and, though her desires may conflict with the mother's principles, usually if we succeed in pleasing daughter, we may be confident that, in the end, mother will agree. This is the cue for handling the sale when mother and daughter are companions.

Though the situation outlined above may be extreme, it is far from exceptional; for it is an undoubted fact that the daughter has a very much greater influence on the decision than the difference in years would seem to justify. This is often caused by the feeling of the mother that styles are changing and that possibly the daughter's taste is better. Sometimes the daughter has been away at school and learned many things which the mother feels ignorant about. Frequently the mother quite rightly believes that the daughter's wishes should be consulted in the selection of her clothes, and indeed is even rather proud to have the assistance and taste of her daughter in selecting clothes which the mother herself is to wear.

**Style to the daughter, price and quality to the mother.** We are advised that in general daughters are more interested in style, while mothers generally emphasize price and quality. So, usually, it is well to talk to the mother about price and wear and to the daughter about style and fashion.

**Mother's clothes.** When the mother is buying wearing

apparel for her own use, we often find that she likes more conservative things than the daughter likes to see her wear, and we then have to bring out a great deal more merchandise before we find a combination that pleases both. Similarly, in shoes, the mother likes broad toes and heels, for comfort, while the daughter wants her to buy something more up-to-date. Sometimes the saleswoman can help things out by saying to the mother, "You are going to wear them, not your daughter, so don't you think you had better take what will give you the greatest satisfaction?"

**Daughter's clothes.** The same holds true in selling a suit or a dress for the girl. Then the salesperson says to the mother, "She is only young once, you know, and it is natural she should want to look like the other girls this season." That is to say, we may either find compromises that will please both rather well, or else we may throw the weight of our argument toward giving the actual wearer what she thinks she will like.

The salesperson in toilet goods often has to persuade a mother to allow her daughter to buy tinted powder, or other toilet articles of which the older woman does not quite approve. She uses the argument that these are not harmful to the skin, that a great many more use them than was the case in mother's girlhood, etc. The same salesperson says that the girls who want to buy these things, and know their mothers will object, put off the purchase until they can come in alone.

**Buying for the home.** Those who sell furnishings for the home have less trouble with this situation than do those who sell wearing apparel, because apparently the girls recognize their mothers' superiority in this field or are not yet so much interested in home-furnishings. Salespeople in the furniture, draperies, linen, and china departments experience little trouble in making their sales to the older woman, even if what is purchased is for the use of the



daughter. "In linens we usually please the mother because the daughter sees as well as we do that experience and taste come with the years." "In the draperies we cater to the mother's greater judgment and knowledge of our goods."

Yet, even in this department, the spoiled-child problem is often met. As one rug salesman says: "I find that when the mother and daughter disagree, it is the mother who can be swung around to the daughter's choice oftener than the daughter can be persuaded to accept the mother's selection. You have to find out which is used to having her own way and sell to that one, but you must be careful, of course, not to give them anything they ought not to have. It is true that lots of young people these days, by the time they go to housekeeping for themselves, know almost as much as their mothers about home-furnishings, so that nine times out of ten they are right in their preference."

#### SECTION 4. HUSBAND AND WIFE

OF all our problems in dealing with two shoppers, shopping together, that of the husband and wife seems to present the least difficulty. There are many departments in which the man does not concern himself with the sale. And in those in which he might naturally be expected to participate, he usually leaves the whole decision to his wife. From many salespeople comes such testimony as this: "We sometimes have men shopping with their wives, but they don't often disagree." "Except where a man is buying something for his own use, he mostly lets his wife run things." In the sewing-machine department the man will say, "You talk to *her*—she has to run it. I only pay for it." In the rugs the statement may be made, "She is the one who has to clean it and live with it. Let her have what she wants."

**Father's clothes.** In those departments where she is helping him to buy clothes for himself, we are told that we must concentrate our selling attention on him, since he is the one to be pleased, but if the wife has evidently

been brought along to help in the selection, we must defer to her also. We are advised in case of dispute to side with whichever seems to us to have the better judgment. The likelihood of the dispute is greater if the wife is of the type who likes to "boss" her husband, because then she may argue strongly for what *he* does not want. In such a case, if we enter into the argument at all, we had probably better risk her displeasure than use our influence to persuade him to buy what he dislikes. But it is much better for us to show a greater variety of goods and try to discover something that will please both. In all sales to two persons, merchandise purchased against the will of the one who is to use it will often be returned.

**Differences.** When the purchase is being made for the wife's use, the husband frequently wants a voice in the matter, and in the interests of peace he should have it. Where there is a difference of opinion, where things seem to come to a deadlock, it sometimes pays to say very politely: "If she likes this, she is the one who is going to wear it, and I think we ought to let her buy it, don't you?" The husband may be induced to admit that, since he picks out his own clothes for himself and will not let others interfere, he ought to extend the same liberty to his wife. Here again it sometimes pays to leave them alone and let them talk it over. So, also, it is advisable to show other merchandise which may please both of them. Fortunately we often find, with many happy middle-aged couples as well as with newly married ones, an eagerness on each side that the other shall buy what he or she seems most to desire.

Of the two, it is oftener the man who is willing to spend generously. "Get the best they have. I don't care if it does cost more," is the rule of many husbands when they shop with their wives. This applies not only to personal buying, but also to goods destined for the home. Various rug salesmen spoke of the husband's willingness to buy higher-priced things than the wife wants to consider.

"Quality is what the men are after." Some salespeople think that if the husband did all the buying, the household expenses would be increased twenty-five and even fifty per cent, because of this tendency of his.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Do you mind having salespeople wait on a second person while waiting on you?
2. How have you seen it nicely done to you by an expert salesperson?
3. How do you handle the second customer if she says that her purchase will take only a minute, but you find that it stretches out too long for the satisfaction of your first customer?
4. Tell three stories about how you have seen good salespeople handle two or more customers at once.
5. Make a list of the methods to be used in handling the companion when a customer brings a friend along with her.
6. How have you handled such cases yourself?
7. Give two cases of where you have had to handle hard mother-daughter cases. How did you do it?
8. Collect all the rules mentioned in section 4 which tell how to handle husband-wife cases.
9. What experiences have you had with them and how did you handle them?

## CHAPTER XIV

### LEARNING TO KNOW MERCHANDISE

#### SECTION I. THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

**Introduction.** As experienced salespeople watch the beginners at work, they notice the great need of a better attitude toward knowing stock. They see that some are very slow to realize how powerfully this kind of knowledge influences their chance of promotion and pay. Sometimes they are not really interested in their jobs, or if interested they are not alive to the importance of such knowledge. They seem to think that all the knowledge of stock they will require will come to them naturally in the course of the day's work, without any special effort on their part. But testimony from those with long selling experience proves that thorough knowledge of merchandise is obtained only by definite effort, and that the more the salesperson concentrates on it as a part of his job, the more quickly and thoroughly will he learn about it.

**The advantages of knowing stock.** There are at least four reasons why it is important to know our merchandise thoroughly.

**Creates confidence.** First, as we showed in chapter I, the customer's confidence in the salesperson is of great aid in helping to promote the sale, and one of the very best ways to inspire the customer's confidence is by talking intelligently and truthfully about the goods shown. If the customer asks questions which the salesperson can answer in a manner that sounds intelligent, the sale is very materially helped and the customer is likely to return to that salesperson again and again for service. If, on the other hand, the answers are hazy, or if the salesperson has



to confess lack of knowledge, the handicap is difficult to overcome.

**Saves time.** In the *second* place, a great deal of time is saved. (1) Because the salesman does not need to refer the customer's questions to some one else; though, as a matter of fact, the salesperson whose interest in his work is not sufficient to lead him to find out about the merchandise is usually equally unwilling to take the trouble to ask some other salesperson for help in answering the customer's questions, but will rather let the matter go by saying he does not know or by faking a half-truthful answer. (2) Because he knows where to find the desired merchandise promptly. If he lacks this knowledge of stock location, he will either waste a great deal of time looking for things which he should be able to find immediately, or else, in some cases, may inaccurately state that what is wanted is not in stock. Ability to locate the goods without delay, and to answer the customer's questions immediately and accurately, will obviously save time; and saving time enables the salesperson to wait upon more people, and also inspires the confidence of the customer.

**Provides answers to objections.** In the *third* place, the salesperson who knows his merchandise can answer objections both pleasantly and effectively. When a customer makes a statement about the goods which is not correct, the salesman can set him right, or if the customer does not find exactly what he wants, the salesperson who knows his stock and what uses it may be put to, can provide something that will perhaps suit the purpose just as well. This is particularly important because very often the inability to turn an objection loses the sale.

**Pleases the salesman.** In the *fourth* place, and in some respects perhaps most important as a reason for knowing stock, the salesperson acquires the pleasant consciousness that he is an expert in his work. There is absolutely no question that no matter what the line of labor a man follows,

there is a unique pleasure and joy in feeling that he is master of his line and that he can carry it on with efficiency. This is the greatest reward which comes in connection with work. There is many a man who sacrifices money and luxury because he prefers to devote his life to a vocation of which he is master, and which gives him the feeling of superiority and victory. Such are the rewards that come to all masters of their craft, and it holds just as true of the art of selling as it does of any other line of endeavor.

**How ambition begins.** Many inexperienced salespeople, as has been stated, have at first no interest in learning about their merchandise, whereas the experienced people who have been successful have this ambition. It is interesting to read the stories of the experts, to see how they got their first desire to become masters of their craft.

One salesperson states that he "*always* wanted to have real facts behind any argument or discussion with a customer, and the salesperson must *know* — he cannot *guess*." Others begin to take interest because they were *embarrassed by their inability to answer the customer's questions*, as shown by the two following quotations: "So often when I first came into this department the customer would ask some simple question about the merchandise and I would find that I could not answer it. This made me feel ashamed of myself, so I started to work to find out everything that customers could possibly want to know. This got me into the habit. It seems now as if I had always known these things, but of course it took learning." "The customer asks questions. Now, you may not know the *first* time you are asked a thing, but there is no excuse for not knowing the *second* time. Whenever I have to say, 'I don't know,' I find out the first chance I get, and the next time I know. The other day a woman asked me what a certain kind of embroidery was which was used in the vest of one of our dresses. I had never seen it before and had to say I did n't know, but I went straight down to the embroidery counter and found

out. Next time I will know all about it when I am asked."

Another salesperson was fortunate in *having somebody give her early advice*. "Somebody told me when I first came into the department that the best way to use any spare time I had was not to stand around talking with friends, but to get busy learning my stock. She told me what to do and how to do it, and I have always been grateful to her because it is wonderful what you can learn in a few weeks in spare moments when there are no customers to wait on."

Another incentive is *the bitter experience of losing sales*. "Several years ago I remember a time when I noticed myself losing sales because I could not seem to convince customers. They did n't make up their minds, and I used to feel that in some way it was my fault. After thinking it over I finally decided I did n't know enough about my goods to talk them up properly. All I could do was to keep on saying, 'That's good — you ought to take that,' and I could n't seem to make the customer see *why* she ought to take it. So I learned to know my goods, and it comes easy now."

## SECTION 2. WHAT KNOWING OUR STOCK MEANS

KNOWING our stock includes, of course, *stock location*. It is important to know where the goods are, for two reasons: *First*, knowledge of stock location helps us to locate stock quickly so that thereby the sale is speeded up. *In addition*, as just pointed out, it frequently keeps us from making the mistake of saying that goods are not in stock, when as a matter of fact they are.

But "knowing our stock" means much more than merely being informed as to where to find it. *In a very large sense it means to know why the goods in the department are worth the prices asked for them*. A salesman was asked by the customer, "Why do you ask fifty dollars for this suit and only forty dollars for that one?" and the salesman replied,

"Because the fifty-dollar suit is made by such-and-such a firm and we know that whatever they put out is good." But this is a lazy man's answer, and makes the customer feel that the salesman does not know his business. If the salesman who is working with goods all the time has no knowledge of values — often not nearly so much knowledge as has the customer who is buying — he is not an artist. He is a mechanic, and will hold his job only as long as he has no competition.

**Raw materials.** In order to know one's merchandise, it is essential to have the necessary facts concerning materials and concerning their use. In knowing about *materials* the salesperson needs to know the differences in raw materials, why this kind of cotton is better than that kind, why the raw material from which this silk is made is better than that. He needs to know that this material is made out of wool, that material out of wool and cotton, and the other out of shoddy. The importance of this information is realized by one salesperson who says, "When I came into the department, I did n't know serge from worsted, nor did I know what to look for if the customer asked for cheviot, so I learned how to judge some things for myself by finding the cost price and comparing such things as weave, durability, etc. For a long time I had to ask whether a suit was cotton or wool. Now I can tell, myself, by the feel whether it is all cotton or all wool or mixed."

Such knowledge involves not only the textile materials, but also the various woods, metals, leathers, and so on, that are used in making other kinds of merchandise. Indeed, there is no department in a large store in which the salespeople can do without a fairly thorough familiarity with the raw materials from which their goods are made.

**Manufacture.** In addition they need to understand methods of *manufacture* in order to demonstrate to the customer that this article is more desirable than that because the manufacturing process is better; the button-holes



are made by hand instead of by machine; the shoes are "bench-made"; this hand-bag is tooled by hand while the cheaper bag is machine-tooled.

The importance of this is stated very well by the salesman who says: "It is n't only raw material you have to learn about. To this must be added the manufacturing process. You must know what makes certain weaves look as they do, and how the material is finished. You have to be able to say what will wash, and what will clean, and how well things may be expected to wear. The styles are always changing and every year brings new names for materials. Good salespeople just have to keep up with the procession."

**Values.** Not only is it necessary to know about the raw materials and their manufacture; perhaps the most important knowledge is that concerning the *service* that can be gotten out of the merchandise — such points as what the material can be made into, the durability that can be expected of it, the appearance that will be produced, the quality of the merchandise, and its finish, its practical usefulness or its comfort.

These ideas are quite clearly expressed by the salespeople as follows: "I have found," says one, "that you have to know how the merchandise is going to be used after the customer gets it home. If you do this, you can often persuade her to take something that does n't appeal to her in the store, just because you know it will fit her needs at home. This is true with any kind of home-furnishings, and not only of the furniture itself, but also of all other house wares — lamps, china, upholstery, and pictures. It also applies to anything mechanical that has to be treated in a certain accurate way if it is to operate right; as for instance cameras, sewing-machines, and vacuum cleaners. A thorough understanding of the process, operation, and care is valuable in selling such merchandise."

Illustrations concerning *durability* are to the point.

“Some people think they can show the customer that they know their merchandise just by assuming a very positive manner and an enthusiastic way of speaking, but there is a lot more than that. They need a solid background of accurate knowledge about their goods. For instance, this morning a woman buying silk stockings from me asked for a certain make which we did n’t happen to have in the color she wanted, so I brought her another make, which was just as well known and just as good. When she expressed doubt I explained that the quality was the same, and I went on to say that the difference in the wearing qualities in stockings is almost entirely a matter of the way they are washed and taken care of, and to illustrate this I told her a story about our assistant buyer. She believes that stockings go into holes most quickly because they are not washed often enough to counteract the effect of perspiration, so she tried an experiment on a dollar pair of silk hose. These she washed every night, and succeeded in wearing them for sixty-three days before a hole appeared. This was just because she kept them washed and was careful to have her shoes smooth inside.” Knowing your stock so thoroughly as this suggests, and being sure of your facts, will help to convince your customer more quickly than any amount of enthusiastic conversation.

In order to explain the sudden rise in prices, a knowledge of merchandise is necessary, as shown in the experience of the salespeople during the World War. “When the prices began to go up so, a few years ago, I thought it would be interesting to know why they were going up. I read the papers and magazines, and I talked to the most intelligent and up-to-date men I knew, but I could n’t find out much that was definite. And in all these years since, I have n’t been very successful in learning the ‘why’ of the price of things in general. But I’ll tell you what I do know — I have got by heart the reasons why the goods *in this department* have to be higher than they were years

ago, if the store is to make any money. I found that out from the buyer, and I keep on asking him whenever anything new comes in that seems to be priced in a way that will make customers exclaim, or perhaps object. You've got to know how to answer the ones that accuse you of profiteering, and you can give them a lot of good reasons that will knock them down without being a bit exaggerated."

**A man-sized job.** Knowing the stock is, therefore, a matter of very much greater importance than mere familiarity with its location. It means intimate acquaintance with every article you may be called upon to sell, the ability to explain its superiority or inferiority in comparison with others of its kind, the reasons for its cost, the way it must be worn, used, and cared for, its advantages in the way of raw material, manufacture, style, finish, novelty, wear, and popularity. In short, we must know its life-history from the cradle to the grave.

That this is no small thing, to be learned in a week, or a month, or a year, is the experience of the best salespeople whom you know. They assert that it is the product of earnest and intelligent effort over a long selling experience. They also tell us that they never would have earned the right to be called experts if they had not mastered their merchandise thoroughly and were not still keeping up on its fresh developments from day to day. They state without exception that this knowledge can be obtained by conscious effort, and by conscious effort alone.

### SECTION 3. THE BEST WAYS TO LEARN

**By experience.** There are in all some six or more methods of learning merchandise. Many salespeople say they owe their knowledge of stock to experience, and without doubt experience is one of the greatest teachers, *provided* the learner profits by his experience; but unfortunately there are plenty of people who sell all their lives without improving noticeably, just as some women will cook for years

without learning to make savory dishes. All the experience in the world is powerless to teach us if we are not watching ourselves for mistakes and if we are too unwilling or careless to turn these into progress. The young salesman who profits by each day's experience can teach himself more about his stock in six months than another man who has been there for years, but who has been blind to his opportunities. One shoe salesman strikes the nail on the head when he says, "Make your experience serve you as you continue to sell, but don't count on its helping you much with a knowledge of stock, unless at the same time you employ methods of learning which involve hard work on your part."

**By handling goods.** Salespeople testify that they can make use of the ordinary department routine to learn a great deal about the goods; since not all their time is filled with actual selling, they can learn a great deal about stock in their spare moments. They put goods away, hanging them on racks and filling boxes and drawers; they cut and mark remnants; they are set to cleaning; they lift and move merchandise that has been brought out for examination; they unload new goods from trucks; they are sent for in the stock-room to help get merchandise ready for a sale. In all these processes they keep their eyes open. Such plans are emphasized by the following quotations: "I worked in the stock-room for two months before I began to sell, and both then and after I came into the department I tried to get familiar with every part of our stock. I rehung and put away, I helped trim, I unpacked new goods, and in all of it I was getting the feel of the different kinds of materials." A woman who sells china says: "I spent all my spare time going around to the various tables and comparing different sets, noting the makers' names, the prices, and patterns. I noticed everything that would help distinguish the different kinds in my mind afterwards. I have a lot of natural curiosity and it certainly got satisfied



during the time I had the job of cleaning shelves and cases. I handled everything we had in stock so many times that I could see it with my eyes shut, and I found it did me so much good that every once in a while now I pitch in and clean for a day or two, just to keep up with what we have in stock."

**By watching others.** One salesman started as an errand boy between department, office, and stock-room, and kept his sharp eyes open wherever he went, so that he absorbed information about the merchandise not only by handling it, but also by watching others to see how it was sold, and he listened to what was said about it. All he gained in this way he began to use as soon as he could get permission to do a little selling himself, in emergencies when everybody else was busy and customers were waiting. This man gets the credit he deserves, for he is now known as the best authority in the city on the goods sold in his department. Many other salespeople will testify to the usefulness of sharp eyes and open ears.

"I did n't know one kind of lace from another when I came in, and it was very puzzling. Then I learned to listen to other girls when they had customers, so as to learn the different names and how they were pronounced, and also where the various kinds came from, something about how they were manufactured, and whether they were made by hand or by machine."

**By asking others.** To admit ignorance frankly and ask all sorts of questions is one of the very best ways of gaining knowledge. It probably brings in more good, solid information in a short time than does studying merchandise itself or watching and listening to other people. There are five classes of people from whom information may be sought. These are the older salespeople, heads of stock, buyers and assistant buyers, wholesale salesmen, and even the customers themselves. Any one of these may know more about goods in any department than the green

salesman does, but it is not only the inexperienced people who can learn from them. The successful and experienced man or woman who will keep on asking questions about the goods, learns something every day. The following statements indicate the use that has been made of these different sources.

**By learning from other salespeople.** "I was lucky enough to be put into a department where the older girls were nice to new ones and would tell them all sorts of things about goods when they had time. I found they did n't mind being asked, so every time I came across something I ought to know, but did n't, I went to somebody and asked." The head of the department sometimes requires the older salespeople to give assistance to the inexperienced ones, as is shown by the following quotation: "In our department the buyer expects the more experienced salespeople to show new ones about goods and tell them the beginnings of what they will need to know. He watches to see that they do it, too."

**By learning from customers.** "There are ways of making the customer tell you things without realizing that she is doing it. I remember how scared I was the first time a woman asked me for a real filet collar, for I did n't know the difference between real and imitation then. But I did n't let on. I did know there was a drawer marked *Real*, and I brought that out, hoping there would be some filet in it. When I put it before her, she promptly put her hand on a piece with the remark that showed me that that was real filet. After she had gone, I went through the drawer for other pieces like it, and made one of the women show me how I could tell it from the imitation." The saleswoman in gloves gives an interesting experience. "Once while I was fitting a customer with gloves, she said something I did n't understand, though I had been selling gloves for a good while. So I just frankly asked her about it and it turned out she was a glove expert. Before she got through,

she had told me a good many things I did n't know. I had the pleasure of passing them on to the other girls, who did n't know them either."

**From wholesale salesmen.** "In our line we can get a great deal from the outside salesmen when they stop and talk on their calls. They have the latest selling points and are all primed to answer questions and objections." "The glove salesmen are usually nice and willing to talk about their products. I learned most of what I know from a man from the big French glove center, Grenoble."

**From the head of stock.** "The head of stock can do a lot for girls who want to learn, if she feels like it. In our department the stock head takes us around for the first day or two, shows us where things are, and tells us whatever she can think of that will help us. Then after that we always feel free to ask questions."

**From the buyer.** Everybody says that the buyer and the assistant buyer can give more help than any one else if they will, and from all sides comes the testimony that as a general thing buyers do give assistance to their salespeople. They differ as to policy, of course. "My buyer is n't much to talk about his goods, so I just said to him that if he wanted me to talk about them and sell them I would have to know more about it. I told him he had to open up, so he did." Somewhat more responsible is the attitude of others. "As soon as new stuff comes in from stock, our buyer or the assistant comes in and shows us all about it. He tells us how it was made, where it comes from, what sort of people will want it, and how they will use it. He gives us all the selling points he can." "Some buyers wait until you go to them with questions, but ours does n't. He understands so well all the points that we have to know in order to sell, that he often tells us before we think of asking. He comes around and talks to us individually, or else he calls us to the office and gives us

instruction in the group. And when he says he wants us to ask questions, he means it."

**From manufacturers' pamphlets.** The manufacturers of many kinds of goods issue catalogues and other printed matter of various sorts that will help the salesperson. Take, for instance, the tiny booklets inside of the boxes or wrappers of toilet preparations; or, tucked into gloves, the directions for trying on and washing; or the circulars that come with household appliances, telling how to set them up, how to use them, how to take care of them. The salesperson who passes those over with indifference, dismissing them as "nothing but advertising," is depriving herself of a very useful method of learning about her goods. It is to be supposed that the manufacturer knows more than almost anybody else about the way his goods are made and used, and the person who sells them should profit by every hint that she can get from him. If such printed matter does not come to your hand naturally, along with the goods, go and find out where you can get hold of it. The buyer will probably have plenty.

**From trade journals.** In the buyer's office you will doubtless find also the trade journals relating to the merchandise you sell. Much that is in them will not interest you, but from each one you will surely get something which will justify your hunting it up.

It is true of this kind of reading as of any other, that, although the first attempts at broadening your information in this way may seem rather stupid and unprofitable, the fault is often not with the reading matter so much as with yourself. You do not yet know very much about the subject, and it is hard sledding because of the unfamiliar terms, etc. But if you keep on, persevere, go after that trade journal every month, you will find it getting easier and more interesting. The more you know, the more fascinating becomes the prospect of getting further knowledge. Let this promise guide you in all your reading



about merchandise. It is what has guided the other salespeople from whom these reading suggestions come.

**From home and fashion magazines.** These are like the trade journals in the help they give you on current changes and new ideas in your merchandise, especially if you are in a department selling either household goods or ready-to-wear goods. If you subscribe for fashion or household magazines, read them attentively with an eye to applying in your work all that you learn from their articles and illustrations.

Here are good talking points for new dresses or waists or coats as they come in. Here are helpful "discoveries" that housewives make about their home-furnishings, about kitchen contrivances, "short cuts" in cooking, sewing, and cleaning, all of which you can turn to practical use in selling the kinds of goods that these home-makers use.

The woman who sells fine laces learns here the best and safest ways to clean and wash them, and passes on this expert advice to her customers. A magazine paragraph tells the linen salesman, and he tells the woman who buys table linen from him, of the trick of rubbing soap along the edge that is to be hemmed, so as to let the needle go through more easily. The stocking saleswoman runs across a statement of the right way to wash silk hose, and gives her customers the benefit of her knowledge.

Your buyer's office will perhaps have several magazines of this kind each month which may be lent in the department. Let him see that you enjoy reading them, and that you make some use of what they suggest to you.

**Through hints from advertisements.** Salespeople speak also of the help they get from the advertising pages of their store, both the descriptive text and the drawings; from the booklets, catalogues, and such printed matter issued by the store's advertising writers; and from the advertisements in current magazines. All of these contain the most definite kind of concrete information about every sort of merchandise — its use as well as its manufacture.

**From newspapers.** One man tells of help that he got from a friend in the department. The latter had long been in the habit of reading those pages in the local and New York papers which deal with business conditions, exports and imports, etc., and he passed his idea along to anybody who was interested enough in his work to dig out the occasional valuable items of information to be found there about market conditions in his own goods.

**From books.** Salespeople who are really interested in knowing all there is to be known about their goods usually find very soon that much of it exists in very attractive form in merchandise books. There are books printed on nearly every kind of goods sold in your store. Some of these are simple, some very long and technical. You will know which you can get most out of. The point is to *get* them. And that is not hard in any city equipped with good library facilities.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What are the advantages of knowing your merchandise?
2. What facts in the beginning led those who became experts to study merchandise?
3. What is the difference between "knowing your merchandise" and "knowing the location of your stock"?
4. What three kinds of information are necessary in knowing your merchandise?
5. What is meant by "values"? What are the values in shoes, millinery, yard goods? What are the values in the merchandise sold in your department?
6. Which of the fifteen sources of information do you use?
7. Which of them are the easiest for a beginner to use?
8. How does the *handling* of goods aid in getting a knowledge of stock?
9. What do you think of using the various kinds of reading material mentioned? Why? Have you used any of it? How do you like it?

## CHAPTER XV

### HOW TO TAKE CARE OF STOCK

#### SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

THE department that does the biggest business is the department with the best-kept stock. Stock-keeping is a very powerful factor in the running of any department and its importance must be appreciated by every salesperson who is going to make the best use of his time. There are four important results effected by the condition of the stock.

(1) Poorly kept stock *loses sales* because the amount of reserve stock represented by the sample is not known accurately. The customer looking at white enameled beds wishes the three-foot six-inch size, but the tag on the sample — which is smaller — indicates that this size is out. The salesman necessarily goes by that, and the customer, who cannot wait for a special order, goes elsewhere. She has lost time, and the store has lost a sale, for the salesman learns a half-hour later that the tag was wrong — that there had been plenty of that size in for the past few days — but the person in charge of the stock had not corrected the tag.

(2) Poorly kept stock *makes a bad impression on customers*. A woman may want a particular suit in a size of which the rack contains only one sample. If that sample happens to be mussed, or a little soiled, or if some of its buttons and fasteners are loose from much trying on, she will not want that suit; and as it appears to be the only one of her size in stock, she does not buy at all. Yet another one of her size, in perfect condition, is hanging twenty feet away, among some suits of another kind altogether, where it does not belong, and where no one would think of looking for it.

(3) Poorly kept stock *has a bad effect upon the salespeople*. They take no pride in such stock, and since they do not believe in it, they cannot sell it with enthusiasm and confidence. Sometimes, when they are in a hurry, they go to the place where the stock ought to be, and when they do not find it there they become irritated and ask "What's the use?" Or they will disturb another salesperson by asking whether she has seen such-and-such a garment, thus wasting the time of the customer to whom she is talking.

(4) Not only does poor stock-keeping result in loss of sales, and in creating a bad impression on both customer and salespeople, but it also means, often, that *actual damage is done to valuable merchandise*. Not long since, in a large department store, it was noted that some fifty-dollar waists were lying in a mussed heap on the top of the counter. These blouses were so good that if they had been on sale in some stores they would have been given special cases and would have been handled with extreme care by the salespeople. But after a few days of the mussing treatment, they had to be marked down below cost, in order to put them within range of the pocket-books of women who did not object to their being soiled and mussed.

The importance of this point is brought out by the following statements from executives:

"Stock must be considered as too valuable to be soiled and damaged through insufficient care. Salespeople should realize that a department can lose quite a good deal in the course of a season by having its stock improperly taken care of."

"Damaged merchandise, and lost sales, are the result of not putting stock away, but letting it lie around in a mussed heap, or with other heavier things piled on it. They are the result also of putting it away wrong — that is, hanging it with the wrong goods, or putting it in the wrong box, or the wrong pile, where nobody would think of look-



ing for it, or hanging it up carelessly in a way that pulls it out of shape. They result, finally, from putting away merchandise that has been torn or wrinkled, or is losing buttons or fasteners, instead of sending it for mending right away."

"Having an effective method of taking care of stock in any department is not only good for the stock and good for the business — it has an excellent effect on the salespeople themselves. Dividing up the responsibility develops every salesperson's self-reliance and appeals to her pride. It leads to better service in increasing the interest they feel individually and as a group, in the appearance of the department. It teaches them all the ins and outs of the stock they sell. It tests them out, and lets the store see what they are really worth. It makes them more considerate in their treatment of other people's stock. And it develops loyalty to the department in showing them how much their department depends on them for its efficient running."

## SECTION 2. SUGGESTIONS FOR STOCK-KEEPING

BECAUSE experienced salespeople recognize that all these results come from poor stock-keeping, they have worked out a series of rules which differ in different departments, but which have many ideas in common.

Good stock-keeping does not come by chance. It is the result of definite methods, clearly worked out by salespeople and executives, and put into steady practice by the force.

The most usual type of effective system does two main things: (1) it divides the merchandise in the department into well-defined sections, and (2) it puts one salesperson in charge of the stock-keeping in each section. It then makes this salesperson fully responsible for all the duties in connection with the keeping of that stock. It defines the nature of these duties and prescribes the time when

they shall be performed. The stock-keeping duties are usually divided into the arrangement and the care of the stock.

While it is not possible for us to treat of the methods of handling stock in each department, the following general rules apply in all: (1) *Learn the principle* by which the stock is arranged; that is, whether it is grouped on the shelves, in drawers, or on racks, whether by price, size, or color, or on some other basis of arrangement. (2) *Memorize the locations* where the different groups are *regularly* kept. (3) *Put back into its right place* all stock brought out to show. (4) When putting goods back or when bringing them down from the stock-room, see that color, size, price, etc., are *arranged in their proper order*. (5) *Keep all lines filled up* — size, price, material, color, etc. (6) *Report any line that runs low* to the head of stock. (7) *Keep the stock record accurate and up to date*. (8) *Brush or wipe the stock regularly*, often enough to be sure that it is kept perfectly clean. (9) *Remove damaged merchandise*, or report it, examining stock frequently to be sure that goods imperfect in any way are promptly removed.

These general rules may be applied to all departments, being adapted to fit the peculiar needs of each department in which they are used. To assist in this we have collected a number of statements from a large number of departments as to the way in which the stock is kept in each.

SECTION 3. EXAMPLES AMONG READY-TO-WEAR GOODS  
In women's and misses' clothing. "Keeping stock right in this department," the saleswomen say in the women's suits and dresses, "is almost as important as selling, and not very much easier. We all learn the system when we come in, the way that the suits and dresses are arranged, and our own part in taking care of the stock. Each saleswoman is assigned a certain section of the stock to take care of, and she is held responsible for keeping it in order.

Each is supposed to do her own work, but we all help each other when help is needed.

“What we do is this: We go over our stock early in the morning to see that there is a full line of sizes, colors, and prices, and that the garments are hung on the racks in the understood order, so that any one can find them in their places through the day. We examine them for loose buttons and fasteners and hooks, for lost belts, torn linings, and any other damage such as is likely to happen in the course of a day’s business. All these things have to be fixed, and fresh stock obtained to put in the place of those being repaired. Then, through the day, we are supposed to put back every garment that is shown, exactly in its right place. Of course there are stock girls for this, but you really have to look after it yourself, usually. They are supposed to report loose buttons, etc., too, but they don’t!”

In the misses’ suit department much the same method prevails. “We keep the afternoon dresses in one case, evening in another, and street in a third; and everybody understands this. In each case they are hung by size and price, and must be kept that way — not only at the beginning of the day, but later, as each girl puts back what she has taken out to show. In the morning each girl looks after the hooks and eyes, buttons, sales-tickets, and so on, in her own part of the stock. She sees that every garment is clean and fresh-looking, that all prices and sizes are marked clearly and correctly. If she notices any tears or defects in her stock, they must be mended at once or they will get worse as they are handled further.”

**Clothing for men and boys.** “All our merchandise is arranged very systematically in the cases, in an order that every man understands. Each man is put over a certain number of tables and cases, and is then held accountable for the stock in that section. This means that it must not only be in order, and clean and neat, but that he has to

see that sufficient new stock is brought down every morning to keep his lines complete. He must go over his cases thoroughly at regular intervals, often enough to assure himself that the stock is clean and in good shape for selling, sizes and prices marked, and all arranged according to the rule in the department.

"If there are no stock boys he has to hang up his own stock after a sale, unless customers are waiting. Of course, having stock boys is the best method of assuring a prompt replacement of garments taken down, but even when there are boys, the salesman often has to put the things away himself if he wants to be sure it is done."

#### SECTION 4. EXAMPLES AMONG SMALLER ARTICLES OF WEARING APPAREL

**Sweaters.** "Each salesperson here is responsible for her section of stock. She has to keep it clean, arrange for putting the sweaters on forms for display, and see that a full range of sizes and colors is kept up. This means a trip to the stock-room early every day for replenishing. When we notice our stock of a certain line getting low, we notify the head."

**Millinery.** "We have to take great pains here with our stock, because hats get spoiled so easily if they are not handled right. We are not supposed to leave any number of hats lying in front of a customer for examination, but to keep removing those that she does n't like, and unobtrusively putting them back into their drawers, so that she never has more than three before her. This keeps the whole department looking more orderly, and is better for the stock, as well."

"I always put every hat away the instant I am through showing it, if the customer does n't care for it. After a sale is made, I put away at once the three or four she was looking at. If another customer is waiting, I may have to postpone this, and just lay them aside for a few minutes,



out of the way. But the first free moment I have, I put away all hats that do not belong out. You can't let the goods stay around. Of course, while customers are there to be waited on, you can't attempt any very thorough straightening up — you have to wait until you get a few minutes in between customers."

**Hosiery.** "Here we separate black from colors, and grade them by prices and by sizes. Boxes must be kept clean, and placed neatly on the shelf so that they look well. Each girl is answerable for keeping her own stock full from the stock-room."

**Furs.** "We try to keep in touch with the whole stock, each of us getting acquainted with new furs as they come in, and learning where the various different kinds are located. We go over the stock every morning. Then, after each sale, we put things back promptly in place, for if they lie around it gives a cheap look to the department, and risks getting small pieces mislaid. The counter should be left bare after each sale."

**Gloves.** "Each salesperson has her own section to care for. She takes charge of sizing her gloves, replenishing her stock daily, ordering when stock gets low, and keeping her stock clean and neat."

**Waists.** "Light and dark colors are separated, and silk, cotton, linen, georgette, net, and all the other materials kept in their separate places. Then, under each of these, the sizes are arranged in order; a pile of different styles and prices in voile, size 38, being together, for example. In this way you know exactly what you have in stock, and can find instantly what you need for a customer. You are expected to keep your own part of the stock clean, sorted properly, and with a full line of sizes and prices. Then every girl who sells from it has to put back each pile or waist exactly where she got it."

**Ribbons.** "Each salesperson is responsible for her section of stock. She has to keep it clean and attractive-

looking, arranged in an orderly way, and replenished daily from the reserve stock."

**Linings.** "Our linings are arranged by color, width, price, and material, in various piles as understood clearly by each salesperson. These must be replaced as soon as the customer leaves the counter, or while she is waiting for her change. They must not be allowed to lie on the counter. For if they are, it is n't good for the linings, it makes the counter look mussy, and the other salespeople don't know where to look for what they want."

#### SECTION 5. EXAMPLES AMONG HOUSEHOLD MERCHANDISE

**Furniture.** "We keep furniture in sets, not standing in a stiff row, but set around in a natural way as the various pieces will look after they get to the customer's home. The most expensive things are kept in a conspicuous position near the elevators, but a few are also sprinkled around among the cheaper pieces, so that customers who have to buy the cheaper won't feel that their kind of furniture is considered unworthy to be placed alongside good stuff.

"Some of the pieces are arranged in furnished rooms, and kept looking clean and attractive. All our furniture needs dusting and polishing frequently to look right.

"The chief stock-keeping duty of the salesmen is to see that the record on the tag is accurate. If stock is marked 'Out' and it *is* n't out, we lose a sale; if marked 'One left' and there are none left, we oversell and get into trouble with the customer."

**China.** "The best methods of stock-keeping that we know here are *Soap — Water — Brush — Duster!* You would n't believe how much scrubbing it takes to keep our stock looking nice. You have to keep after it, too, for dirty china does n't sell.

"We don't sell the samples out on the tables, but fill orders from stock. Early in the day we clean our samples, look at the reserve, and let the head of stock know what

she must send down from the stock-room when she goes there with her list for replenishing. There she fills in the missing pieces, seeing that each has a sticker pasted on it showing number and price. All the stock work must be done the first thing in the morning, and not allowed to hang over through the day."

**Pictures.** "Here, one salesperson takes the frames, and the picture stock is divided into sections, with one salesperson taking the responsibility for each section. He must keep blanks filled up on the wall, as they are made by the sale of pictures. He must see that every picture is marked plainly as to price, and must keep up with the condition of the reserve stock."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What are the results of poor stock-keeping?
2. Give the nine rules for keeping stock in shape.
3. Make out a series of rules for a beginner in a department with which you are well acquainted.
4. Do the directions given in sections 3, 4, and 5 correspond with those used in your store for the department which you know? If they differ, have you an opinion about which is better?
5. Can you think of any rules for stock-keeping needed in the goods you are selling now, which would not be needed in most other departments?

## CHAPTER XVI

### LOCATING STOCK QUICKLY

IN a survey of a shoe department it was found that the time required to get a pair of shoes from its place for a customer was from fifteen seconds to thirty-five minutes, the average being one minute or over. One fourth of the trips to the shelves took over two minutes each. To be sure, some of the delay in the longest trips may have been unavoidable, occasioned when the customer needed shoes which are seldom called for and so are kept in a place of which few know, or when the salespeople have had to send to the stock-room for the size or kind wanted. But such exceptions must not blind us to the fact that too many sales are slowed up because — through lack of training, or indifference — the salespeople fail to find their merchandise with reasonable speed.

It has been estimated that the time needed for a sale can in some departments be shortened by as much as twenty-five per cent, and in all departments can be shortened to some extent, if the salespeople have their stock location at their finger-tips. It is altogether likely that one of the most serious criticisms made about poor salespeople is the time they spend looking for stock. The customer, as she waits, sees them looking up and down shelves, opening boxes, gazing vacantly about, and wandering around after other salespeople to ask them where the goods are to be found. This spoils the atmosphere of the sale, annoys the customer, and so harms the store greatly. On the other hand, the salesperson who can go directly to where the needed merchandise is, bring out exactly what is wanted, and place it before the customer in a business-like way, may often, by this very promptness, tip the balance in favor of the sale.



There is, of course, some excuse for failure to locate stock quickly. The department may have many articles in it, the goods may have been moved around for a sale, or the salesperson may be new in the department. So, because of these difficulties, expert salespeople have worked out a number of methods which they use in getting that speed which is of so much importance to the customer. These methods may be formulated in seven rules.

**(1) Merchandise must be systematically arranged so as to be found quickly.** This puts the responsibility up to the management of the department, and unfortunately the management is often very much at fault here. In some department stores which are considered to be the most progressive, there is no arrangement of stock that can be called such. The buyer may object to any such systematic plan, or may think that the salespeople can learn locations without any plan. Moreover, in the case of sales, goods are moved from one place to another and the salespeople are not notified. Or a new line is brought in, and all the older merchandise is moved around into fresh locations.

Salespeople admit that a certain amount of moving is necessary, but the location of goods is often disturbed much more than efficiency justifies.

Therefore, the rule may be laid down that merchandise must be systematically arranged, the order depending upon the department. We find, for instance, that one dress department has "all browns on one rack, all blues on another; low prices at your right, high prices at your left, as you use your right hand most." Another salesperson says: "Our stock is conveniently arranged. The high-priced goods are all at this end. The initialed handkerchiefs are arranged alphabetically. The lower-priced things are on the lower shelves. The best sellers are up front where they are handy."

**(2) This arrangement must be memorized.** Our sales-

people lay more stress upon the memorizing of the arrangement of the merchandise than upon any other one thing, and they suggest several methods which apply particularly to the several departments in which they work. Nothing better can be done than to quote a few of these. One salesperson lays great stress upon the fact that what she learns she "learns by heart." She says: "When I came into the department I spent the first day studying the location of stock. I found where the black coats were, and where the blue, etc. Then I decided I ought to know about materials; for example, the kinds of fur used in the 'fur-trims.' When the winter goods came in, I made a list of the new materials. Then I took a sample of each and studied it along with its name. I learned everything by heart. Now I am sure I know every material here absolutely." Another salesperson says, "I memorize the line number of the merchandise, the price ranges within each line, the qualities, and ascertain whether the garments run true to size." Another one memorizes so thoroughly the general plan of the boxes, as they are placed on the shelves, that she "can find them with her eyes shut."

Salespeople speak of the necessity for working hard on the problem. "I *dug*, and *dug hard*." "When I first came into the department, I spent all my spare time going through stock and looking *inside* the boxes." "When I first began selling, a good friend said, 'I have only one piece of advice to give you. Know your stock!' So I went to work and plugged away until I learned it."

(3) **Merchandise must be handled.** Some salespeople remind us that "*the best way to know where to find things is to put them away yourself.*" "In spare time I used to go through the drawers containing reserve stock and rearrange it. Careful dusting in the morning also helps to make you familiar with your stock."

Others say that in some departments when the new girls are not busy, they go all around the department looking in

the drawers and cases to see where things are. They take out boxes, handle the goods, and put them back in again. Persistence is of very great importance; it helps greatly to look over your stock every day.

(4) **The goods must be put back promptly in the same place.** One of the most discouraging things in the department is to have salespeople carelessly forget to put things back, or fail to put them back in the exact place where they belong. Another condition that is almost as bad arises when the salespeople delay the replacing of goods for some time, and allow them to lie around. Consequently a number of devices are used. We are advised to replace the goods promptly while the sale is on, if it is possible to do so without neglecting the customer. For example, ribbon may be rewound on the bolt while we are talking to the customer. Certainly, after every sale the goods brought out to be shown should be put back in their proper places, and by all means it is desirable to put back properly each night all garments taken out for display during the day.

There should be a place for everything, and everything should be put in its place. In one department they say that "if one of us at this counter is busy with a customer and the other is not, the one not busy selling puts away the goods on the counter." "This is hard," it is remarked, "in a department where a good many people are handling the same stock, because some salespeople are afraid of doing too much." Each one must be made to feel responsible for replacing, herself, the goods she shows, and for keeping things in order in the boxes where they belong, so that others may find them easily.

It is very evident from these quotations that keeping goods in their proper places is a matter for discipline by the head of the department. It cannot be left to the responsibility of the individual salesperson, and must be shared equally by every one, severe measures being used if necessary.



(5) **Location of new goods must be learned.** Whenever new goods are brought in, they may upset the arrangement of the goods already there. Consequently, departments that are interested in this matter of stock location insist upon having all new goods brought to the attention of the salespeople, so that their location may be learned. "I walk through the department and take mental notes of the changes made in the location of certain pieces of furniture." In other cases, "it is required that every one look at new goods before they are put away. Sometimes the buyer shows new goods and gives the selling points, and other times they are placed on the floor for a while so that they may be observed before being put on the shelves."

Calling attention to new goods is strictly the problem of the buyer, and failure to do this is one of the most common weaknesses of buyers and assistant buyers. Whatever the reasons — whether the fact that stock is put in overnight, or that the department is so large that it is hard for every one to see new material — whatever the reasons, they are never strong enough to excuse the buyer from invariably seeing that new stock is brought to the attention of the salespeople. Then, once it has been brought to their attention, the responsibility of learning its location shifts to their shoulders.

(6) **In hunting, concentrate.** Salespeople remark on the vacant look of the inefficient who are searching on shelves for material. They speak of salespeople who look all through drawers or sections or shelves and cannot find merchandise which "if it had teeth, would bite them." So they tell us to "get busy and look! Use your head — don't dream! Remember that you are in the store for work and not for play."

There is a very great difference in the ability of people to find things, and we are told that we can train ourselves by a number of devices. When looking for an article we can say to ourselves over and over again, "I want a *brown* shoe,"



or, "I want a *blue* dress." We can say, "I must concentrate—I must keep my mind on this." When we find our mind wandering off on something else, we can pull it back with a jerk. It helps to run our finger or our pencil along the shelf and keep our eyes on the point indicated—thus preventing them from skipping over a space which may contain the very thing we want. Some people say that they locate things more quickly by running their eyes from right to left, or from left to right, from top to bottom, or bottom to top. Others think about what the thing they want looks like, banishing from their minds images of other kinds which might distract them.

(7) **Keep the customer busy.** One of the most interesting devices which we have run across in our interviews is this: One of the important motives for locating stock quickly lies in making the customer feel that he is getting quick service. No customer likes to wait, and therefore one minute of waiting may seem like five. So our seventh plan makes use of a very interesting psychological fact. If people are busy, the time passes more rapidly, so one of the salespeople utilizes this fact, telling us: "I leave a piece of the goods in the customer's hands while I look for other material. If she has something to interest her and hold her attention, she does n't realize that there is any delay."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Have frequent speed tests in locating stock. For instance, let the buyer or some salesperson make out a list of ten articles to be found in the department, such as, "A 3A tan oxford with Cuban heel, selling at \$8." Let this list be given first to one and then the other. The time at which it is given to one of the contestants is marked down and the time at which all the articles are correctly returned to the starter is noted. Then the list is given to another and the time noted again.
2. State all the rules for quick location of stock.
3. Draw a chart of the arrangement of the goods in four departments that you are acquainted with.

4. What methods are used in your store for seeing that goods are promptly replaced after being shown? Replaced from reserve after being sold?
5. How does your buyer inform his people about new goods brought into the department?
6. How do you make yourself concentrate when you search?

## CHAPTER XVII

### OPENING THE SALE

#### SECTION I. ESTABLISHING A PLEASANT ATMOSPHERE

**Introduction.** In the sale, the salesperson has three duties to perform. He must help the customer define her need; he must place before her the merchandise which will best satisfy it, at the same time presenting any information that will supplement the goods; and last, he must give her whatever information is necessary to make a selection which will completely satisfy her. These three duties are rather roughly included in the terms *opening the sale*, *displaying the merchandise*, and *closing the sale*. But it must be remembered that not only in the opening of the sale, but all through its progress, the salesman is trying to find out more exactly what the customer wants; and that in closing the sale, when the selection is being made, it may be necessary to display additional merchandise or to bring out again merchandise that has been rejected by the customer. However, the three divisions make a satisfactory basis for description if we bear in mind the qualification just mentioned.

**Purpose of the opening.** In the opening of the sale, when the salesperson first comes into contact with the customer, he has two things to bear in mind. One is, that he must build up the right atmosphere for the sale so that the customer will have confidence in his desire to help; the other is that he must start to find out what the customer wants to purchase. In order to do this there are four methods, all of which should be used. (1) The proper degree of interest and courtesy should be shown in order to build up the confidence of the customer. (2) A quiet and inconspicuous sizing-up of the customer should take place to

gain any possible facts in connection with the sale. (3) The proper questions and the right number of questions should be asked. (4) A satisfactory display of goods should be made. In this chapter we shall deal with the first two of these, the display of courtesy and interest, and the sizing-up of the customer; the problem of questioning will be treated in chapter XVIII and the display of goods in chapter XIX.

**The proper atmosphere.** Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the fact brought out first in chapter IX; i.e., that the feelings which enter into the sale have much more to do with its success or failure than any other factor connected with service. If we grant that the goods are reasonably satisfactory, then the next and most important thing is the atmosphere of the sale. If that is agreeable, the sale is helped. If the general tone is unpleasant, the sale is distinctly hindered. Although we took up in chapter IX the methods of showing interest and courtesy, we must supplement them here, because of their great importance.

The atmosphere most favorable to the sale depends upon several different factors.

**Promptness.** "If there is any one thing more than another that pleases me in a department," one customer has told us, "it is to be met by the salesperson or the assistant as I enter; or, when I go toward a counter, to have the salesman step up immediately and offer his services. That is to say, I *don't* like to have to wander around after help or to face the embarrassment of prying a salesman away from his boon companions in order to get waited on." This means that the customer should be approached if in an open department, or spoken to without delay if it is a counter department. Whenever possible, the salesperson should go to the customer rather than the customer to the salesperson. Promptness is, therefore, the first element in the opening of the sale, as recognized by many of our experts who say, "Show the customer you are eager. Step



out quickly and show that you are not dead on your feet." "Greet the customer as soon as she approaches." "Be alert!" "See the customer promptly and approach her at once in a friendly, business-like manner." "I think all customers like to feel that some attention is being paid them upon their approach. It is flattering if other work is laid aside for them."

From our own experience we know that this sometimes means dropping everything else when the customer comes in. If we are working on stock, we can quit; or, if we happen to be waiting on some one else, we can surely find time at least to notice her existence. Instead of paying attention to our customer only, and not noticing others who come in, we must have our eyes open for new customers who enter while we are busy with an earlier one. By some small attention which takes only a second, we can let her see that we have noticed her. For instance, a salesperson busy selling groceries says, "I stop long enough to ask her to be seated. I keep my eye on her when she comes in, and try to wait on her in her turn."

**A pleasant smile.** There is clearly a danger of our letting our smile become mechanical and overdone, so all remarks concerning pleasantness have to be taken in connection with the statement that in order for our pleasantness to be appreciated by other people it is necessary that it be felt inside of us. A smile must be an indication of our real attitude. Nothing we can do or say will give the customer the impression of genuine pleasantness and courtesy unless "we feel that way inside." It is of course evident, as has been pointed out before, that the smile must not be over-friendly, nor imply familiarity. A smile is not so much a curving of the lips as a matter of feeling pleasant and letting the friendliness and pleasantness shine through. One salesman says, "I don't often actually smile, but I try to make my expression pleasant and willing."

**A pleasant greeting.** In addition to approaching the

customer promptly and pleasantly, it is important that the words of greeting help to build up an agreeable atmosphere.

There are no set forms of greeting, and it is rather important that the same words should not be used every time, or they tend to become mechanical. Some of the phrases are, "Is there something I can do for you?" "May I help you to find something?" "Is any one giving you attention?" or, sometimes, just the words "Good-morning" or "Good-afternoon" are used, without any question, and when this is said the customer usually asks for what she wants. There are certain forms of greeting which customers do not seem to like particularly, as we have discovered from wide investigation among them. Our informants particularly dislike the question, "What do you want?" "Do you want something?" "Something?" and "Something for you?" On the other hand, they like such expressions as, "Are you waited on?" "Are you receiving attention?" and "May I help you?" Clearly they object to *my dear*, *dearie*, *honey*, *girlie*, and *lady*, used at any time during the sale.

The tone of the greeting is of more importance than the words, for the same words which from one person sound pleasant, from another person may express sulkiness, gruffness, or unwillingness to be of service. When greeting a new customer, it is not enough to use some set phrase. If the words are meant to be helpful, they must *sound* helpful, so that the customer can start to base his confidence in the salesperson on them.

One of our salesmen gives his own experience as follows: "Last week I was hunting for an overcoat. When I went into one store the salesman said, 'What can I do for you?' sort of rough and indifferent. I said, 'I don't know that *you* can do anything for me,' and just walked out. *I did n't want a grouch to wait on me!*" On the other hand, two saleswomen make the remark that "I believe the customers

‘fall for’ the salesman who appears interested and who really means what he says when he asks ‘May I be of service to you?’ ”

**Use judgment.** We are warned by experienced salespeople that the form and cordiality of the greeting must depend greatly upon the way the customer is sized-up. It is of course safe and necessary to feel interest and willingness with everybody, but some customers are pleased with less cordial expressions than others like. Just as there is danger in seeming dead and lifeless, so there is also danger in being *too* affable. Much depends, therefore, upon the kind of department you are in.

If we sell gloves, for instance, or are anywhere on the main aisle on the main floor, hundreds of customers merely go through our section in order to reach the elevators or other departments. Some of these are prospects and some are not. If we catch the eye of the first kind we may offer to show something, because as a prospective customer she is interested in whatever we are selling, and the conversation may be entered upon pleasantly; but if she is just passing through and does not want any attention paid to her, even though she pauses for an instant to look at the goods, she should not be spoken to. We must wait until she shows a real interest in the goods, or looks up from them as though seeking a salesperson. In that case we may go up to her, but not until then. Up to that point our cue is simply to stand at attention watching her, so that the instant she indicates more than a passing interest we are alert to help her. If she does not show any such interest, we let her go on.

If, on the other hand, we are selling in departments to which we know a customer does not come unless she wants to look at goods, the situation is different; it is very important here to approach the customer immediately and express our willingness to serve.

The impression gained by the customer in the approach

in either of the situations just described is that of our courteous willingness to serve her, so that the proper atmosphere is obtained at the very beginning of the sale.

## SECTION 2. SIZING-UP THE CUSTOMER

It will be recalled that in the chapters on sizing-up the customer a number of salespeople asserted that when a customer first approaches them they try to find out everything they can about her from the first glance; and we learned that a good deal of skill was developed in time. We learned also that in the sizing-up the salesperson endeavored to find out facts both about the general characteristics of the customer and about the particular needs which have brought her to the department on this occasion.

There are five sources from which this information can be gained. The *carriage* of the customer is noted in order that we may decide whether he is of the alert, business type, whether decided or undecided, whether just looking around, or intent on buying something. The *clothes* are observed, particularly in departments where clothing is sold. But we are informed that while we can judge from the clothes the kind to show, we cannot tell a very great deal about the price the customer will pay. Nor, in departments not selling clothing, can we tell from his clothes a great deal concerning what he wants to purchase. The *expression* of the face indicates whether he is friendly or disagreeable. From his *actions* in the department we can tell a good deal about his interest in the goods, and whether he wishes to be waited upon or not. Especially from his *conversation* are we able to size-up his characteristics and learn definitely what he wants. We are told that the tone of the voice, the words, and the grammar reveal the breeding and taste of the customer. It is clear, of course, that the needs which have brought him into our department on this occasion are revealed as soon as he begins to talk.

This summary of the material found in chapter III sets



before us the methods to be used in sizing-up the customer and opening the sale. The first minute or two of contact is very valuable to us. We can at once modify our attitude in the sale to fit what we find out during these first moments. Even though we may make mistakes in our sizing-up, it is better always to try to do it, and then, when the customer has gone, we may check our first impressions against our later ones; and in time we may grow to expect in sizing-up that we can gain a fairly accurate idea of the customer as soon as we have seen him and he has said a few words.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What do we try to do in opening the sale?
2. Why should we seek to gain the customers' confidence?
3. Why do customers have more faith in prompt than in slow people?
4. Are not pleasant people sometimes unreliable? and the grouchy honest? Why, then, do customers have more confidence in pleasant than in grouchy people?
5. How good is your judgment in sizing-up people?
6. What do you have to look out for?
7. What are the five things we notice in sizing-up customers?

## CHAPTER XVIII

### DEFINING THE CUSTOMER'S NEEDS BY QUESTIONS

#### SECTION I. ASKING QUESTIONS

**Finding what the customer wants.** In finding out the needs of the customer the methods actually used are three: (1) partly by sizing-up the customer's appearance, (2) partly by asking questions, and (3) partly by showing goods, watching the customer, and listening to her comments. The first of these we have discussed in the preceding chapter, the second we shall dwell upon in this chapter.

**Some do not show goods first.** If the customer's appearance does not help us much in judging what to begin to show, is it better to start the sale by asking some questions as to what is wanted, or is it better to begin immediately to bring out merchandise? Opinions differ. Some do not advise questions. "When I walk up to her, I merely ask, 'What can I do for you?' and nothing more until after I have shown some goods." Another woman, who sells garments, finds that some customers are so timid they do not know exactly what they want, or if they do know, are shy about asking for it. So she puts no questions at all, but rather starts in at once showing dresses of various kinds, and asks her questions as the sale proceeds. "All I ask at the beginning," says this salesperson, "is whether the dress is to be cloth or silk."

But this is not the general thing among the expert salespeople. By far the great majority prefer putting a few questions before starting to show goods.

**Ask questions first.** It is not difficult to see the reason for asking some questions immediately — there are so many different kinds of garments in a department, made of dozens of materials, in many different sizes and colors, and at a

wide range of prices, that it would be foolish to proceed by guesswork. We may be able, perhaps, to guess at the size from experience, and to judge suitable colors to show, but aside from such guesswork we have nothing to go on. We must ask questions if we are to avoid wasting the customer's time and our own by showing a lot of things which will not do.

**Not too many questions.** Although few customers dislike being questioned, it is not wise to question too much at first. The practice of some salespeople of firing a volley of questions at the customer before starting to show anything may create a bad impression. Only once in a while does a customer come to us with her mind fully made up as to exactly what she wants; and when she does, she generally tells us the details without our asking. So, if she approaches with only a vague idea of her needs, we are likely to confuse her if we ask a large number of rapid questions.

Another drawback to asking too many questions at the beginning of the sale is that by thus making her commit herself on details, we are narrowing our own choice of what to bring out for her consideration; for perhaps our stock may not contain precisely what we have led her to describe, whereas if we had left the matter more open she would possibly have been quite as satisfied with something a little different which we *have* got. Or, if she commits herself in the early part of the sale, she may be unwilling to take something different when she sees it later on in the display — something that she might have taken if her opinion had not been forced too early.

**If the customer is in a hurry.** In connection with questions, several salespeople speak of the customer who says she is in a hurry. It is safe in this case to ask a large number of questions, because if she is in a hurry, we may be sure she knows pretty definitely what she wants. There is then no harm in asking the woman who wants a waist whether it is to be silk, cotton, or wool, a tailored shirtwaist or an

elaborate blouse. But it is well to bring out several articles while questions are being asked, so that we may indicate our willingness to serve her in a hurry. Our questions, however, should be asked casually so that she will not get the idea that we are trying to pin her down.

Also, such points as color in suits and dresses, size in a handbag, the weight and finish of silk, and the character of the wood in a piece of furniture, should be asked about immediately if it is desirable to save time. If, however, the customer is not hurried, it is better to ask only a few questions and let her preferences come out as goods are shown.

## SECTION 2. WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS TO ASK

**Ask questions about the use.** In many departments we should scarcely know what to begin to show unless we knew what *purpose* the customer had in mind. That is, we need to know the occasion for which the article is being bought, the time of day or the function for which it is intended (if wearing apparel), or the place in the house which it is going to fill. There are so many varieties of goods in each department that we shall know better what to show if the customer will start us on the right track. So at the outset we ask her, if she has not already told us, such questions as these: "Is it a dinner set you wish to look at?" "Do you wish a silk or a woolen sweater?" "Is the lamp for a library or a bedroom?" "Do you want the gown for street wear or for formal occasions?" "What age is the boy for whom you wish the suit?"

In practically every department we may ask such questions before we begin to show goods. As the salesman in the picture department says: "It is usually necessary to ask two or three leading questions. If the customer says, 'Let me see some frames,' you have to find out whether she wants a small, standing frame, or a wall frame. Then you have to find out whether the picture she wants it for is a landscape or a photograph. From that point on, you can



let her remarks guide you, but just at first it certainly saves time to ask her a few questions as to what she wants to use the article for."

**Do not ask size!** It is the most natural thing in the world for salespeople to ask at once, "What size, please?" yet we are told that this is almost the worst mistake we could make in the matter of asking questions. While there are many customers who do not mind announcing what size they take in clothes, shoes, waists, or underwear, thousands of others — probably the majority of women — intensely dislike this question. Therefore, we must take some other means of finding out their size without asking for it outright. Then, too, some people forget it, or give the wrong size, because they buy things so seldom. A man, for instance, may not remember the size of his underwear from one time to another. Again, the sizes are frequently so poorly standardized that it is necessary to measure or try on in order to be sure that the article now being looked at will actually fit.

Consequently, finding out the size *without asking* is a very important part of the business of the salesperson, and it may be done by two or three means. The simplest one is to take measurements. The glove saleswoman measures or feels and squeezes the hand, the shoe salesman measures and calculates with his stick, and in the corset department the waist may be measured with the tape. Any of these, of course, will give the exact information. But many salespeople train themselves so that they often do not need to take measurements, because with the eye they can estimate sufficiently closely to bring out the first article; from this they are able to judge the closeness of their guess, and to bring out other articles accordingly.

Estimating or measuring the size presents one very definite advantage in that oftentimes the customer will not be correctly fitted if we depend upon her statement of size. She may have it wrong. So a quiet sizing-up, without men-

tioning size at all, enables the salesperson to get the exact thing that will fit. It is common enough to hear customers say, "Well, no wonder my feet were uncomfortable. What I needed was a longer and narrower last!" or, "A forty certainly sets better on me than a thirty-eight ever did. I wonder that no one has ever made me wear it before."

**Don't ask the price!** It is equally unfortunate to ask the customers what price they want to pay. Price is, to be sure, an important part of any sale, but it is not one of the things that can be gone at directly, in so many words. Even though some customers do not mind being asked what price they want to pay, it is better to have the price come in naturally at the point where the customer asks about it himself. If, for instance, we find that he wants to know the price immediately, then on all succeeding articles it may be stated at once. See chapter XXIV for a fuller discussion of price.

**Asking about color.** We are advised that it is not well to raise the question of color in those goods where color is of importance. This is shown by the following quotation from one of the salespeople: "In selling waists, suits, and the like, I don't believe in asking the customer at the start what color she has in mind. Half the time she has n't any set idea, but wants to wait until she sees the goods before making up her mind. Then, besides that, if you get her to say she wants some certain color, you may find that you don't have it, and then both you and she are disappointed and she may go away without buying." Another salesperson sometimes asks about color, and sometimes does not. "If it is the beginning of the season and stocks are full, I feel fairly safe in asking my customer what color she wants; but I don't do it after our lines have begun to go down. I think it is usually better not to ask, but just to bring out the different garments in several colors which you think becoming to her type, and let her see what she likes best." A third salesperson reports this experience: "I once made a

mistake with regard to color, and it taught me a lesson. A woman said she wanted a small hat. As we had in some new brown ones, I asked 'Brown?' before I thought, and she said, 'No, dark blue.' Well, as it turned out, we did n't have a dark blue that would do, and I know perfectly well that if I had n't asked her the color, but had just led her over to the brown ones, she would have taken one of them. So now I just don't ask about the color, but bring out some in various colors. Half the time they forget any previous idea they had, and fall in love with a hat in a color they had n't even thought of getting."

**Asking about materials.** In some departments we may ask at the beginning about the material that is wanted. A furniture salesman will usually want to know whether the customer wishes a mahogany chair, a white bureau, or an oak dining-room suite. The customer who asks for a waist will be asked whether she wants lingerie or silk. If the customer wants a picture frame, he must usually say whether it is to be gilt, mahogany, or silver. So, also, in buying rugs the customer will be asked whether he wishes grass rugs for summer, rag rugs, or a Wilton, and so on. The prime reason for all these questions is the saving of time and trouble, because the answers will tell us to which part of our stock to lead the customer.

At this point we have reached the limit set by experienced salespeople for the number and kind of questions to be asked at the beginning of the sale, before showing goods.

In the next section we shall give a rather interesting list of statements about questions to be asked in the different departments, to serve in part as illustrations of what has been said, and in part as suggestions from one department to another of questions which have not been asked, but which might, with advantage, be asked.

## SECTION 3. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS

WE have already noted the kinds of questions put by salespeople in ready-to-wear departments. From these and other parts of the store come also the following suggestions as to the proper questions to ask:

**Furniture.** The furniture salesman, for instance, asks first whether the customer wishes a piece of furniture or a suite. Then he asks its purpose — that is, what room it is to go in; what other furniture it must match; the size of the room and its general coloring. Unless he ascertains such points, he may sell something unsatisfactory.

**House-furnishings.** “We have so many different kinds of merchandise in this department,” says the house-furnishings saleswoman, “that we have to ask a general question in order to get started. When once we know the type of thing wanted — refrigerator, sweeper, percolator — then we try to learn the purpose for which it is to be used; that is, how many there are in the family, how many servants are kept, and so on, to see what particular size or make will answer best.”

**Upholstery.** Like the furniture salesman, those who sell in upholstery departments ask about the kind of room for which the draperies, or cretonne, or tapestry for coverings, are being bought. How many windows has it? What are its dimensions? What sort of lighting? What sort of furniture? What colors in the rug? What kind of wall-paper? All these questions lead to a better understanding of what is needed. And — “I don’t ask her how many yards she needs, but help her myself in making the estimate.”

**Shoes.** A shoe saleswoman contributes: “As we have one hundred and twenty-four different kinds of women’s strap pumps — alone — in our department, it is absolutely necessary to ask questions so as to get a general idea of the color, style, material, and heel type preferred by the customer.”



**Silks.** In the silks, the purpose is asked. Is the silk to be used for a waist, gown, hat, coat, hat lining, coat lining, bag? Is it to be used as trimming? Must it match something else? In dress goods, also, the saleswoman must ask how the goods are to be made up — whether plain or pleated, for instance — so as to know better what to bring out.

**Umbrellas.** Those who sell umbrellas start by asking simply whether a black or a colored umbrella is wanted. "I don't ask which color, but instead bring out something that I think suitable to the woman as she looks to me — a quiet shade in brown, or dark blue, or mauve, for the simply and conservatively dressed woman, and a green or a purple to show the customer who wears a more striking gown."

**Linens.** In the linen department, salespeople usually ask only the general size wanted in cloth or napkins, scarf or towels. "We do not ask the price, or the design, as the customer hardly ever knows these before she sees the goods. Besides, if you asked her to name a design, then when you showed it to her, she might not like it." Another salesperson here says that she asks "the use to which the article is to be put: is the scarf for dresser or buffet? Dinner or tea napkins? The customer usually knows her own mind as to such points. I ask also the general size wanted, and if she does n't know, then I suggest 'tea or lunch cloth, or a set of cloth and napkins?' I may ask whether she would like her tea napkins plain, or hemstitched, or Madeira."

**Jewelry.** The jewelry salesperson asks the general style of thing wanted and then whether it is to be silver, gold, or plate. For the rest — as to indications of the customer's individual taste, and as to whether she is pleased with what is shown — "I do not ask, but just watch and listen."

**Sporting goods.** Both the buyer and the assistant in a sporting-goods department warn their salesmen against asking too many questions. "It suggests that you are too

lazy or too indifferent to show your goods. Find out the size, age, and sex of the person who is to use the article — just the essentials. Don't ask what quality is wanted, and of course don't ask what price the customer thinks of paying. Show your goods, and find out such things that way."

**Women's dresses and suits.** "I ask whether the dress is to be silk or wool, and whether she wants it for any special occasion. I very seldom ask any more just at first, for fear she may think me inquisitive. I bring out one or two that I think may be good, and from trying them on I get her size and the best lines for her."

**Corsets.** "Customers don't like to be asked too many questions. They want you to show the goods, and then advise them in their purchase. I generally ask if the customer knows her size, and sometimes what make she has been wearing — but not what make she wants, because she might ask for something we do not carry."

**Furs.** "The customer usually does n't know what she wants. I ask simply whether she has small furs or a coat in mind, and then I begin to show. If I have n't what she wants, exactly, I ask whether she would be interested in something else, naming a fur that is both good and popular."

**Waists.** "I usually ask her the weight or material first, then light or dark. But I seldom specify color, and never mention either size or price, getting the first from sizing-up her build, and the second from her comment on what I show her."

**Coats.** "We do not have to ask so many questions here as they do in selling suits and dresses, for there is n't so much variation in preference to meet. More has to be asked about those, because individual taste differs as to skirt width, striking colors, trimming, etc., whereas coats are rather more alike. So we can start showing without asking many questions to begin with."

**Pictures and frames.** "It is n't so easy to do without

questions here as in other departments — ready-to-wear, for instance. There they can tell something about a woman's probable preference by her looks, clothes, and general manner. We can't do that here. We have no idea, until they tell us, whether they want pictures or frames, carbon photographs or Nutting subjects, Rheims Cathedral or Maxfield Parrish. We simply have to ask a few questions."

**China and lamps.** "All they can tell us when they come in here is whether they want lamps or china; if china, whether a dinner set or single piece or glass ware, etc. You have to get them talking and walking around and you'll find out without many questions."

**Men's clothing.** "I don't try to pin a customer down too much, usually asking him only whether he wants a coat or a suit. Then I try to get his size from his figure, and from his age I can tell something about whether to show him something conservative or something 'snappy.' But I don't ask him a lot of questions about what he wants, for we may not have it. But by bringing out some suits I may sell him a kind he had not considered and would not have described if I had asked him."

**Men's furnishings.** "When customers come in here, they usually tell us the goods they want to buy. If they don't, I ask whether socks, or ties, or what. If it is a man buying, I ask his size, because men don't mind that as women do."

**Millinery.** "Asking questions certainly lessens the length of the customer's visit, and saves her patience and the salesperson's. But I don't think that much of it is desirable, because sometimes the customer, after telling us exactly what she wants and learning that we have n't it, will go off without looking at anything else, when she might have been sold to if the saleswoman had n't made her define her ideas so closely. I always try to ask very few questions, and get my information from her through the way I show the hats and talk about them to draw her out."

**Children's wear.** The saleswoman in children's wear finds it advisable to question the customer thoroughly, before getting anything from the shelves. "I find out everything I can right away — size, fabric, purpose, etc. — a complete description."

**Knit underwear.** In selling knit underwear, a few very definite questions have to be asked at the start: high neck or low, shoulder-tapes or knitted shoulder-straps, length of sleeves and legs, weight, etc. It is all right to do this, for the customer expects it. "She usually knows definitely what type of garment she wants, and we would waste time if we began to show goods without getting an idea of such details."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What is your opinion about the number of questions to ask first?
2. What are the disadvantages in asking questions at the start?
3. According to the text, what kinds of questions should not be asked?
4. What is your opinion of these points? Why?
5. In your department what is the practice?
6. Do you prefer to ask questions or to get your information by showing the goods? Why?



## CHAPTER XIX

### DEFINING THE CUSTOMER'S NEEDS THROUGH SHOWING GOODS

#### SECTION I. HOW TO SHOW GOODS

**The purpose of showing.** According to the majority of our salespeople, the surest way of hitting on what the customer wants, after a few questions are asked, is to begin to show goods. They bring out garment after garment, turn rack after rack, go from one lamp or picture to another, until the customer sees something that pleases her. As the saleswoman says who sells dress goods, "Showing merchandise is in itself a way of asking questions and getting at the customer's likes and dislikes." A mattress salesman says: "Showing goods is more helpful than asking questions, and works better with most customers. If the customer does not enjoy answering questions, he may be willing to make comments as he sees the goods; and even if he does not make comments, his expression as he looks at things indicates what particular kind of articles interest and attract him."

**Notice the customer's expression.** Both in showing and in trying on, the salesperson must keep on the alert and learn two things from the customer's expression. These are: (1) what kind of things she seems to like us to show, which means that we must show more of that kind, and (2) what things she seems to dislike or to be indifferent to, which means that we must not show her any more of those styles. This is done largely by noticing the eyes and the lines of the face. Two quotations make this clear: "I notice her eyes. If I see her glance coming back over and over again to one thing, I know this is what she really wants; but if her eyes wander away from what I have laid

before her, I know she is not interested and I put it away quickly and get out something else." Another salesperson says: "If she does n't say whether or not she likes what I am showing her, I try to judge by her face what her feeling is. I notice whether her eyes brighten up, whether she smiles, or frowns, or looks undecided. She may bite her lips, or screw up her eyes as though she were considering. All these changes of expression sometimes mean as much as words do."

**Listen to her remarks.** The customer's comments are of assistance. In most sales we can ascertain in a few minutes the needs and tastes of the customer if we pay close attention to what she says about the things she sees and tries on. Usually she makes some comment, either favorable or unfavorable, upon each garment as she considers it, and each of these expressions of approval or disapproval indicates what we ought to show her next. If we can get her to make these helpful comments, we shall be able in a short time to tell exactly what sort of thing will suit her.

**Act on what she says.** It is important that we act according to what we find out. If we just listen and pass it over, we may keep on showing goods without drawing a step nearer to what she wants to buy.

Suppose you have shown the customer a suit that in general meets the need she has already stated when she asked for a warm winter suit, in brown, with some kind of fur trimming. Suppose she then makes the remark, "Very good-looking, but rather darker than I wanted. That brown is almost black, is n't it?" Clearly, the next suit brought from the rack will be her size, warm-looking, with fur, just as she asked for, but in a *lighter shade* of brown than the one just shown. Then if she says, "This one is too fussy and too youthful, I think," we are guided in the selection of the next suit, which will again be her size, warm-looking, with fur, a medium shade of brown,

but with *more dignified and conservative lines*. In this way she sees that we are keeping in mind all her requirements and that each suit we bring out is a step nearer to what she wants than the preceding one. This is what is meant by listening to her comments and acting upon them. As one woman puts it, "Pay attention to what they say and make what you show depend on that. Don't just go ahead pulling out any old thing as if the customer had n't expressed any preference."

## SECTION 2. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS

**In furniture.** "Usually the customer tells me what she thinks she wants, as soon as she comes in. If she does n't, I ask whether she is interested in anything special, and say that I'll be glad to show her the furniture. I listen carefully. Gradually she lets it be known that she wants to match some other pieces, or bit by bit she will describe what she wants. If I see her looking intently at a certain chair, I'm right there to pull it forward and make a favorable comment and see how she takes it. If she finds fault, I turn directly to another chair without the point she did n't like, and see what she says to that."

**Women's dresses.** "To find out what the customer wants, I begin to show goods at once, and then watch to see what style, color, etc., she admires. I listen to her comments. She may say, 'But I had really thought of brown,' or, 'I did n't want to pay so much.' If she simply does n't make any comments at all, after I have shown her goods for quite a while, then I ask, 'Is there any color that you especially like?' or, 'Would you like something at about this price?'

"Usually I don't believe in asking, 'What sort of dress do you want?' because that puts it up to her in a way that perhaps she is not prepared for. Lots of women can't tell you exactly what they want, in every detail. It is better to just get a general idea of what they want it for —

whether daytime or evening, business or street, light-weight or heavy — then begin to show something. I note what special points they like in what I show them, and go by those in bringing out others.

“Trying on will help in determining what they like and don’t like, so I always suggest trying on as soon as we find one or two that look good. Of course I can tell which ones they like most by listening to their comments and watching their expression.”

**Corsets.** “Here in the corsets we tell chiefly by fitting the customer. I begin the sale by showing her two or three styles, of the kind I think she ought to wear, and at two or three prices, all medium. If she is extremely well dressed, I begin with something fairly high. Then I watch her expression to see whether she likes any of them. The rest of ‘finding out’ will come in the fitting.”

**Silks.** “Usually the customer says something in a general way when she comes in, like, ‘I want to look at black taffeta.’ Nearly always I show a medium-priced piece at first. Then I can go higher, if she indicates that she wants an expensive quality; while if she looks doubtful over the price, I turn quickly to a cheaper piece, without showing any feeling about it. I always ask the purpose for which the silk is bought, and also whether she has any preference in the kind or the make of silk.”

**China and lamps.** “In this department we have so many old customers that they feel at home here, and we like to encourage them to feel so. Whenever this leads them to open a general conversation first — about their cooks, usually — we have to put off trying to find out what they want. They’ll get to it sooner or later. Then we show plenty of merchandise, taking them to whatever we think they might want, beginning with medium price, suggesting patterns, colorings, etc., and listening to what they say. Gradually we get around to something that suits exactly.”



**Men's hosiery.** "I always ask right away, 'Lisle, silk, or cotton?' because he always knows that, at least. Then I proceed to show stock, bringing out size  $10\frac{1}{2}$  if he has not specified size. If that is not right, he will correct me. As to price, I wait until he either says what he wants to pay, or else notices the price and says he prefers higher or lower."

**Ribbons.** "Most of our customers have a pretty good idea as to what they want, and most of them tell us. If they do not, I suggest what I think would be becoming for the purpose they have mentioned, and I tell them what is the most popular thing in ribbons at the time. Then, when they name a color, I show them all the widths and shades of that color that I have, helping them to make a selection. Often, when it is a case of matching, I can help them a great deal in getting exactly what they need."

**Men's suits.** "I ask him whether he wants to look at a suit or a coat. That is all, at first. I note whether he is young or middle-aged or elderly; if the first, I ask him whether he has any particular style or color in mind. With a middle-aged man, as he is usually conservative, instead of asking him anything, I judge his size and then bring out a conservative color and style. I want to get the suit or coat tried on just the first minute I can, even if he says he is only looking. For no man can tell what a thing is going to look like until he gets it on. Then, when he sees it and says something for or against the color or style, it gives me something to go on for the next one I show."

**Gloves.** "You have to ask right away whether the gloves are wanted for street or other wear, and with what color of clothes they are to be worn. When the customer answers these two questions, she usually throws in something else in the way of useful information that will guide you in showing."

**Rugs and carpets.** "I do not ask questions at first. I

show perhaps a dozen rugs or so, slowly, and inquiring gradually about color, size, and so on. But I don't shoot a lot of questions at the customer at first, or even later 'in a lump.' If the customer is n't sure about exactly what she wants, a series of questions tends to confuse her. I don't suppose I ask more than six questions altogether. Of course, this means showing a lot more goods — and that is hard work here! — but I think it works out better in the end."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. When you show goods to find out what the customers prefer, what do you notice?
2. What is the difference between a good salesperson and a poor one in this respect?
3. Tell a story of how you found out something about the customer's wishes step by step through showing articles.
4. If a customer isn't quite sure about what she wants, what do you then have to do?
5. What is the trouble with silent customers when you show them goods?
6. How do they show goods in a department which you know, so as to find what the customer wants?

## CHAPTER XX

### GETTING THE CUSTOMER INTERESTED IN THE MERCHANDISE

#### SECTION I. HOW TO INTEREST

**THERE** are at least six different methods which can be used in getting the interest of customers in a piece of merchandise.

**By a desire to please.** If the approach has been made according to the directions given already, and if the salesperson has built up a pleasant atmosphere around the sale, the customer will be in the proper frame of mind to take interest as soon as goods are shown, but it is unnecessary to speak about this in detail at this point, because it has been covered before in chapters IX and XVII.

**By discovering what the customer wants.** We can talk most effectively to the customer if we can find out exactly the sort of thing she wants. She will then feel that her time is not being wasted. But when this has been done, it is important to notice what feature of the goods she is most interested in so that the talk can be concentrated upon it. If she is interested in durability, then it is important that she be shown goods in which durability is a strong feature, and durability should be talked about. If, on the other hand, she cares more about having the latest novelty, whether in dresses, wall-paper, or wrist-watches, this is our cue. If we keep on tap plenty of accurate information about the weave, the pattern, the workmanship, and the wearing qualities, we can concentrate our talk on whichever point seems to interest her. In household goods we must know the practical advantages, such as simplicity of operation, long service, variety of uses, and economical upkeep. It is very important that the knowledge of these

points should be definite, so that we can meet the customer upon her own ground with talk that will interest her because it applies to the particular feature that she has shown herself interested in. Particularly is it important that we should know the use to which she is going to put the article. Then we should concentrate upon the features of the article that meet this use. In this way we avoid wasting her time and our own.

**By getting out stock quickly.** Interest in goods is often lost because the sale drags on for too long a time. No one likes to wait while the salesperson is looking for something which should be easily found. On the other hand, the salesman who quickly gets his stuff before the customer makes the time pass so rapidly that the customer's interest is likely to be increased, and at any rate it will not be entirely lost. As a consequence of this it is important to emphasize again the points made in chapter XVI about being able to locate stock quickly.

Interest may be obtained not only by ready showing of the stock, but by business-like answers, in which the salesperson gives the necessary information quickly and answers directly to the point. Hesitation in the voice and manner tends to slow up the sale. Or even if it does not actually slow up the sale, the customer thinks it is going slowly and this is just as bad as though it were actually slowed up.

**By enthusiasm.** It is absolutely necessary for us to believe in our own goods if we are going to interest the customer. This does not mean that we must like everything in the department equally well; that would be impossible. Nor does it mean that we ought to praise everything with the same enthusiasm; that would not be sincere, nor is it good salesmanship. Believing in our goods means that we understand how each different article is suited to some special need, and that we are convinced that the customer will not likely find merchandise anywhere that will suit her needs better, at the price at which our goods are quoted.



It is possible to be enthusiastic about goods which do not appeal to us for our own personal use. Even though they may not be suitable for us, they may be just the thing for the next customer who comes in. Indeed, to let our personal preferences in the matter enter into the sale too largely would lead us to advise people to select things which would be bad for them. We cannot, therefore, recommend indiscriminately. If we are genuinely interested in selling, we can talk with *interest* about everything we have, while we can talk with *enthusiasm* about what we like, and especially about what seems to be particularly appropriate for the customer we are dealing with at the time.

In order to talk enthusiastically and with interest something more is needed than just enthusiasm. Rather, our enthusiasm should be based upon thorough knowledge of the merchandise and of the ways in which different articles will be useful to various kinds of customers. The salesperson who "praises up" everything her customer sees, and says that it would be "the very thing," loses more than she gains because the average customer is too intelligent to believe that every article is just as good as every other, that every waist is the "latest thing," or that this kitchen article is equally useful for the hotel-keeper and for the woman in the two-room apartment. The salesperson who is intelligently enthusiastic will recognize differences in the merchandise and try to make the selling talk bring out these differences with honesty and intelligence, as well as with force and enthusiasm.

**By using variety and individuality.** If the salesman has a desire to please and an enthusiasm for his goods based upon their real values, he has the foundation of a selling talk which will interest; but the words he uses influence the interest of the customer. For instance, the saleswoman may know all the attractive points in connection with new skirts or sets of breakfast china, but if she neglects to speak of these points and uses the same words

over and over again, she will fail to win the customer's interest.

Some of the best salespeople fail in this respect. Here is a pleasant young woman doing her best to show everything her customer may like, but the only word she knows is "attractive." This is "attractive" and that is "attractive." She has used this word so many times before that by now she hardly hears herself say it, and would not know whether it is wrong or not. The girl next to her specializes on "pretty," and another one on "clever." Occasionally some have a great love for "swell," while "smart" may run a close second.

The result of this monotonous use of words by salespeople is that when a customer has heard half a dozen things referred to by the same adjective or phrase, she feels at once that the salesperson has no discrimination, that she is "just talking," and that no particular attention should be paid to her remarks.

We are told that it is better to use facts than adjectives. This means that instead of saying that the automobile tire will wear a long while, it is better to say *how* and *why* it will wear. Instead of merely saying that the patterns of three different rugs are handsome, it is better to show why and how one is different from another. Particularly is it important to show this where there is a possibility that the customer will not notice it for himself. Instead of saying that one trunk will wear longer than another, it is better to explain the differences between three-ply basswood and one-ply, and to show the differences in structure in order to convince the customer that if he wants to defy the baggage-smasher, he ought to take the one rather than the other. These facts teach the customer what *durability* means in tires, *handsomeness* in rugs, and *wearing quality* in trunks. The salesperson might use the word *durable* or *handsome* until the crack of doom without interesting the customer at all, but the minute he proves that he knows

how the merchandise is made and that he sees the use to which it will be put, at that moment the customer pays attention and gets interested in the selling talk.

In this way we talk about the real selling features. It may not be necessary to use the adjective "pretty" at all in selling a hat. Suppose the saleswoman were to say something like this to the customer: "Here is a hat made of a material we have never used before. You see how it gives the effect of spun glass. It is very popular just now in exclusive models, and this is one of its loveliest colors. See how it contrasts with the jeweled pins, which are being used very effectively on the better hats, particularly those which are imported. It is not often you will find these two novelties on the one model." How much more effective this is than to say, "Here is another stunning hat." It is more effective because of the fact that the *concrete points which make it attractive* are brought out one by one.

Salespeople should leave no talking points to the imagination of the customer. Every item of superiority should be mentioned.

Another way of expressing the same idea, which may make our point more clear, is to say that the goods should be given individuality. Instead of saying, "Here is a pretty one," the girl who sells waists had better say, "Here is a voile which washes well, and the insertion and edging used are durable as well as pretty." "In the tailored style this is proving very satisfactory. The roll collar fits particularly well and the workmanship is excellent." "If you like some touches of hand embroidery, you will find an artistic design used on this one, though it is n't at all expensive." Individuality consists of a definite, concrete statement which shows some point about the article which makes it different from every other article of its kind.

**By methods of showing.** Salespeople agree that one of the quickest ways to get and hold the customer's interest is to keep the most attractive or the newest goods in the



front of the department, displayed in such an artistic manner as to attract admiration. In some departments and in some stores this display, as well as the arrangement of the articles on the counters, in the cases, and on the racks, is largely in the hands of the salespeople. And, even where it is under the control of the store decorator, or of the buyer and his assistants, suggestions are often called for from the salespeople themselves. An ambitious salesperson will naturally want to take a hand in arranging it, for he probably feels that, as one man expressed it, "sometimes a good sale is half made by the way we drape the goods in a front case or by the way the merchandise is worn or carried by one of the figures on the floor." A saleswoman says, "Well-displayed gingham sells itself." The methods of showing goods so as to interest customers will be discussed more fully in chapter XXI.

## SECTION 2. HOW TO JUDGE INTEREST

**Comments and questions.** It is possible to judge of the interest of the customer from close observation of questions and comments. If the customer says outright that she is interested in this article or that, and if she begins to talk about buying, then of course there is no difficulty in knowing. We can gather the direction of her interest from the conversation. She may talk about the goods and ask questions about the quality, wearing qualities, style features, and price. She may comment favorably upon this feature and make remarks on that. Or, the man buying a suit of clothes may ask how the material and color will stand cleaning, and may want to know the salesman's opinion of its fit. The woman who is looking at dresses will suggest trying one on, or will agree to the salesperson's suggestion that it be tried on.

Similarly, when customers are not interested, their talk will make it clear. They may talk of other things while we are trying to fix their attention on what we are showing.



They may ask questions which are off the point; they may turn to another pile of goods, and begin asking about these; they may interrupt often; sometimes they fail to answer questions we put to them; and the conversation dies until the customer leaves or we catch her attention by showing something new.

If the customer does not express her interest by her conversation, the problem is much more difficult. It is then necessary for us to observe closely because there are other signs for which we may watch. These are facial expression and actions.

**Facial expression.** "When she is interested, her expression changes; she smiles, looks pleased, and her eyes light up. When she is not interested, you can read it just as quickly in her face. She gazes all around the department, looks at other things far away, or lets her gaze rest on another customer or salesman. All this proves to me that she is paying no attention to what I have been saying, and that I must adopt some other line if I wish to interest her." It is remarked by salespeople, however, that some customers never show great enthusiasm in their expression, so that the silent, inexpressive kind, who do not show their feelings in any way, are particularly difficult to handle. In this case it is possible to gain some additional information from another source.

**Actions and manner.** One salesman says: "I always assume they are interested until something proves they are not. If they fumble around among other things, without paying attention to the article I am talking about, I know they are not interested. If they ask questions about other articles while I am explaining my merchandise, then I can be sure I am not helping them, nor interesting them, with my talk." A very wise salesperson says: "I think a customer's actions change more noticeably when he *stops* being interested than when he *is* interested. I may not know that he is interested, but I do know when he is not

interested, because he will not listen to what I am talking about. He will not pick up the article I am showing, and may even push it aside." "On the other hand," says another salesman, "the customer is usually interested if, after I have been telling him about some special merit in the goods, he looks at it more closely as if to verify what I have just said. Sometimes he will take it up and carry it to the light, or, again, he may try it on." In the silk department one salesperson says, "When she is interested she handles the silk, takes it to a better light, feels it, gathers it up in her fingers and compares the patterns and designs." In gloves she examines the maker's name, asking whether it is reliable goods. Then, even though she lays it aside and looks at others which are brought out, we know that she is interested in it if she goes back to it again and again.

In a department selling wearing apparel, customers' actions when trying on are very significant. "Just their asking to try on is encouraging. I am encouraged if they keep the garment on for some time. If after taking it off they return to it for another trying-on before the mirror, I am sure they are interested. They may turn around a good many times in it and ask what I think about the fit and the hang." In millinery, "If she likes the hat I have shown her, she puts it on again and again, keeping it on longer than she does the others." In coats, "The woman who is interested will feel the material, ask its name, look to see what it is lined with. Then, after she has tried it on, she will hold it next to some others and compare them in value."

Interest can, then, be judged by conversation, expression, and actions.

### SECTION 3. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE SALESPEOPLE

"WHEN I am showing a dress or a suit, I find it interests the customer more quickly if I bring out first the points

that are likely to be most becoming in her case. There may be other good features to the garment I am trying to talk up, but I think it is best to center chiefly on just what is becoming to her in it — the length of line, or the shade, or the pleats."

"If there is one particular kind that I think she ought to have, I try to interest her in it, not only by bringing out its advantages, but by contrasting it with others near by that are n't nearly so good for her purpose."

"Sometimes when a customer asks for a certain thing, I find we have n't got it in her size, and then I have to turn her interest toward something else that we have got in her size. This means persuasive talking, I can tell you, because I don't like to let on that the reason I don't bring out what she wants is that I can't give it to her. It is the same way when they want something that will be unbecoming to them, and you know it, though they don't. You have to switch them onto something else that is better, by talking so interestingly about it that they forget what they asked for."

"If you see her stop and look at a hat as she passes through, don't let her go without being spoken to. You can step up and make some comment on it. Then if she does n't want any attention she can go on, while if she is in a mood to be interested, you can hold her with that one long enough to get her seated before a mirror, where you can bring others to her and perhaps make a sale."

"I believe it is always possible to interest a customer if you prove four things:

"that you know your merchandise thoroughly;

"that you really enjoy selling it;

"that you are glad to be able to help her;

"that you are willing to take all the time that may be needed to suit her."

"I can tell by the way she handles the merchandise, [boys' suits] and examines it. If she is interested, she feels

the quality, examines the make, looks at the lining, asks if the trousers are full-lined, and whether there are two pairs. She consults the card to see the price, or asks me. She will hold onto one suit and then ask to see something a little better. If she is pleased, the first thing she does is to take the suit out of my hands and say, 'Let me see that.'"

"When I get the dress tried on her, if she turns away from the glass and starts to slip it off right away, she is n't interested. But if she turns and admires herself in it, and perhaps asks its price, she is interested."

"You can tell by seeing whether she is listening to you. She is n't if she turns away and begins to talk to her friend and ignore you."

"When they are not interested, it is easy to tell. Their eyes wander all over the department, stopping at first one thing and then another, but they show that they don't care about what you are showing them or what you are trying to interest them in."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What are the six methods of getting the customer interested in a piece of merchandise?
2. Why will a desire to please on your part get a customer interested in an article which has nothing to do with you?
3. What are the methods of learning stock location?
4. Why does enthusiasm interest people in merchandise?
5. Why is it necessary to be sincere in your enthusiasm?
6. Is it true in your store that the goods are so poor for the money that the salespeople may be excused from having any enthusiasm for them? Why, or why not?
7. What is meant by giving goods individuality?
8. Select four articles in your department and use variety in describing them so as to give them individuality.
9. How can we decide that a person is interested in what we are showing?
10. How can we know that he is not interested?



## CHAPTER XXI

### DISPLAYING GOODS

#### SECTION I. THE ORDER IN WHICH TO SHOW GOODS

WITH nine customers out of ten the success of the sale depends largely upon the way the article is shown. The tenth customer may know the merchandise well enough not to need the salesman's help, but for the other nine, the salesman's influence tips the balance from indecision to decision. Of all the arts which the salesman possesses, that of showing goods is one of the most important. There is a right way, or there may be several right ways, and there are a number of ways considered wrong by expert salespeople.

**What to show first.** Whatever the particular kind of customer and whatever the garments we sell, there are several principles agreed upon by the majority of experts as to the most effective order of showing goods. They say that the things to show to the customer upon entering the department are: (1) Articles advertised for that day, often kept on racks, counters, or tables near the entrance or the elevators. (2) Goods on display in the department on forms, tables, counters and racks, and after that, reserve stock. (3) Articles at medium prices, working gradually up or down the price scale. (4) The plainer goods at the beginning of the sale, proceeding from them to the more elaborate styles.

These principles speak for themselves. The first and second are of use in saving customers' time. The chances are in favor of their finding what they want among either the advertised or displayed goods. The third rule, with regard to medium prices, is in line with what customers usually desire. We find, for instance, that out of four

hundred and three customers asked, seventy-four per cent (practically three out of four) decidedly prefer to be shown medium-priced goods. Ten per cent do not care. Eight per cent prefer to see expensive goods first, and the same number inexpensive goods.

Some salespeople are inclined to advise showing the low-priced goods first, but in this they differ from the majority of the experts, and also from the customers, who, on the whole, as our figures prove, prefer medium-priced goods at the beginning.

## SECTION 2. HOW TO DECIDE WHAT TO SHOW IN READY-TO-WEAR DEPARTMENTS

As methods of showing differ with the class of merchandise shown, we may first take up general methods used in garment departments, and then consider later what is done in other departments of a large store. And even if we are selling merchandise other than ready-to-wear, we may get a great deal of help from reading the methods of showing goods in these departments.

**Sizing-up.** Many of the decisions which salespeople are called upon to make seem to depend upon their power of judging the needs and tastes of the customer from clothes and general appearance. How this is done is described in chapters II, III, and IV. Here we are concerned with it as it bears upon deciding what kind of garments to show.

It seems to be best to determine in this way the size needed, the probable price range, and the general type of garment. As one saleswoman says, "I size up my customer by general appearance rather than by what she has on, which is often misleading." Another one warns us, "Of course you will fail sometimes, for you can't always tell by their looks, but you are usually safe in judging partially that way until you have something better to go on."

**Asking questions.** In chapter XVIII we have found that it is advisable to ask a few questions in order to get

some line on what the customer wants. In the ready-to-wear department these first questions are usually double-barreled: for instance, "Would you prefer cloth or wool?" in the case of dresses; or, "Have you any particular color or material in mind?" These open the way toward more specific questions, but the first three or four should establish the material, and the style, and the purpose for which the garment is to be bought.

As has already been advised, the price should not be asked for, nor the size, and most salespeople advise against asking the color desired, as that too often eliminates other choices.

### SECTION 3. WHERE TO SHOW GARMENTS

**GARMENTS** may be shown upon the rack, in the hands of the salesperson, or on the table or counter, or they may be actually tried on by either the salesperson or the customer. For each of these ways there are certain methods laid down by experienced salespeople.

**Holding goods in the hand.** It is not wise to show suits, dresses, coats, or skirts in the hand, but a waist may be held so to advantage. In the case of the waist, it may be allowed to rest on the counter, arranged in a natural position, with one hand fulling the lower part of the front and tucking up the lower edge, while the other hand is used to show trimming or fastening, or to extend the sleeves so that the customer may see the length, cuff, etc. While a garment is still in the hand it may be carried over to the daylight to allow the customer to see it to better advantage, especially if there is any question as to color. It may be taken to a mirror if the customer wishes to try it on.

**Showing goods at the counter.** We are warned by people of experience that it is not best to lay too much out on the counter at once. Garments get piled up and tumbled until the customer has a hard time finding what she wants. Salespeople who do much counter-selling learn to keep

garments separate, in as neat piles as possible, and to put away any that are rejected. This last must be done quickly, for many customers dislike seeing goods put away, because they think it is a hint that the salesperson is getting tired and wants to hurry them. Indeed, for just this reason, some salespeople advise leaving everything on the counter until the customer goes.

Particularly in the millinery department hats should not be piled up. It is better to keep out only two or three at a time. Putting away hats will not give offense to the customer, because in the millinery department the hat is not usually put out of sight, and even if it is removed it is near by and can be got at again if wanted.

It is particularly important that goods should be handled as though they were valuable. Women who sell waists keep some sheets of tissue paper on hand to put under each waist as it is displayed on the counter, preferring this to the velvet padding so frequently found, as it serves to make the waist look more attractive and keeps it from getting soiled. We are informed over and over again that the value of expensive garments is often impaired when they are thrown into piles to get crushed or soiled, and that this keeps the customer from purchasing them because she prefers to see dainty things. If the store does not consider its merchandise to be of sufficient value to have it taken care of, as valuable things should be taken care of, then the customer will not consider that the quality is there.

**Trying on garments.** Methods of trying on range from simply holding the garment against one's own body, as in the case of a skirt, to the trying-on of the garment by the customer. This latter is the most satisfactory method of displaying goods, but it is not always necessary.

Very often a waist can be sold without being tried on, because it can be shown effectively at the counter if held and draped properly. With a suit, the coat is usually tried



on first. Then if this looks promising, the skirt is tried on as well. The simplest way of showing the skirt, by holding it against the body, will not do for a dress or coat. If the customer shows any inclination toward a garment, the wise salesperson will either try it on herself as a beginning, or try it on another salesperson with about the same figure as the customer's. This salesperson must know how to show the garment smartly and gracefully. Or, perhaps, the salesperson may feel that it is about time for the customer to try it on herself. If it is a low-priced garment, it may be tried on over the customer's dress, if the latter is a thin one. Otherwise the customer should be taken to the fitting-room.

Everybody agrees that the sale is getting along well if the customer can be led to try on the garment. This is not always easy, because some are naturally so undecided and weak of will that they do not want to try on anything for fear of committing themselves. But if a high-priced garment is to be sold, getting it tried on is the way to settle the sale. It is important that the garment be tried on carefully. If the customer is handled awkwardly, or if she is uncomfortable, she is likely to grow impatient. Some millinery saleswomen lose sales because they have a hard time learning not to be awkward. They jam a hat on the customer's head, catching and pulling her hair (and tearing her hairnet), and settle it finally at an angle which shows it at its worst. It takes practice to "just let me slip it on you" in a way to show the merchandise to best advantage, and to keep the customer in a pleasant mood. The main point about showing or trying on any kind of garment is to make it look just the way it is going to look on the customer if she buys it. This, combined with the art of holding or draping it attractively and putting it on comfortably, will help greatly in selling.

#### SECTION 4. SHOWING GOODS IN MANY DEPARTMENTS

IN this section are included a number of illustrations of the foregoing rules as they apply to many different departments in a store. These are expressed largely in the salespeople's own words.

##### **Women's and misses' coats and dresses, suits and skirts.**

"I ask a customer to be seated, and then I ask, 'What can I interest you in—cloth or silk?' That seems to save time, for she usually answers one or the other. If she has n't made up her mind, I show her some of both. I perhaps say, 'Here is a rather good new dress. How do you like it?' or, 'Here is one of the best dresses we have in stock.'

"Later I ask if the customer would not like to try on a certain dress. Often she will say that she does n't like to take my time because she is n't at all sure about what she wants. Then I always say, 'Oh, that's all right. I'll be glad to have you try it on anyway.'"

"I try to show the dresses in a good light. I put the hanger in each and hang it on a rack, drawing up the dress at the waistline so that the effect will be better. If it is near my size, I hold it against myself to display it. I suggest that of course it will look better on the customer than just held against me. Then, if it does n't seem to suit the customer just the way it is, I go on to suggest how the sash could be raised or lowered, or some other slight alteration made that would improve it in her eyes."

"I bring out two or three dresses and hang them on the racks so that the customer can see them. I turn them around to show them on all sides. If a dress is new, I say, 'Here is a good model, just in. Don't you like it?' or, 'Here's a dress that I think may attract you,' showing something that I am pretty sure would be becoming."

"Before I bring out any dresses at all, I estimate the woman's age and try to think of an appropriate style for

her. If she is wearing a fussy dress, I would n't show her a very plain one. I'd try to show what would be becoming to her type."

"It seems best to bring out goods right away, but not over three at once. I hold them up one after another, and point out the good things about them. The customer gets confused if she is shown too many things at once, and also she may think that I am too eager to make a sale."

"The good points of every garment shown have to be pointed out by the person selling. I think that is an important part of showing. You must call the customer's attention to the quality of the goods, differences in the grades used in garments at different prices, the workmanship and lining, the trimming, the cut, etc."

"The first thing I do in showing a skirt is to take one down from its hanger and hold it against me so that the customer can see how it looks. If she is seated, I lay it on the table before her. If she does n't know what she wants, I take several skirts out of the case and hang them on the rod nearest her, showing them separately as I hand them. When she expresses her preference, I put away those she does n't care for. When she gets down to two or three, I can usually persuade her to let me slip them on, and then I can pin up the length, or hold it, and get her in front of a mirror so she can see."

"Get them to try them on. You don't have to tell them they can't wear this or that — when they once get a skirt on, they can see for themselves how unbecoming the plaids or gathers or tucks are, and you can do the rest by commenting on the kinds that *do* suit their figures. 'That skirt gives you height,' or 'slenderness' or 'a smart line.'"

"Be sure you know your goods well enough to show them intelligently. Show plenty to select from. Talk convincingly. Let the customer inspect them. Be truthful. If the pleats won't stay in so well in this skirt as in that

one, say so. The customer will appreciate it and you can do it without seeming to criticize your stock."

"Call attention to the good features — the fashionable buttons, the effect of the stitching, the way the belt is set on, the angle of the pockets, etc. If you know your stock beforehand, you can do this."

Saleswomen in the suit and dress departments who try to sell garments from the hanger are making a mistake and losing possible sales, for the best way — indeed, many say the only way — is to try on. Not all garments need be tried on, of course, but only those for which the customer has expressed a preference while they were on the rack or the hanger. But as soon as her inclination seems to have narrowed down to a few, or fixed on one, suggest that she try on so as to get the effect. In no other way can matters of becoming color, line, fit, etc., be satisfactorily considered by either the saleswoman or the customer.

"I never try to show a house dress on the counter, or even in my hand, as long as it is folded. I unfold it and lay it across the table or counter, spread out so that at least the front part shows. Then I lift the sleeves and collar, and begin to talk about it, pointing out interesting features such as pockets, sash or belt, and trimmings. I ask the customer to try it on before a mirror so that she may be more satisfied than if I just tell her how pretty and becoming it is."

**Muslin underwear.** The saleswoman in muslin underwear tells us that she first brings out ten or a dozen articles of the kind asked for by the customer, showing one at a time, and noting what style is evidently preferred. Each is laid aside, conveniently near, when the next is shown. If the customer inclines to fancy styles, then the simple kinds first brought out are not opened up for her to look at, but just pushed to one side. Then many more of the kind preferred are brought out, and the others carried back at the same time. Generous showing is advised —



"Keep on bringing out other styles until you satisfy her."

**Knit underwear.** All knit garments should be taken out of their boxes so that the customer may see their length, size and style, feel their weight, and ask questions about them intelligently. Do not allow too many to accumulate on the counter after they are opened up, but keep putting away those kinds that are not wanted.

**Men's and women's shoes.** The salesman who sells to men tells us that in showing shoes he keeps each pair with its toes pointing toward the customer, "because shoes always look their best when seen from the front. I do this when I lay them on the floor as well as when holding them." After getting the customer's impression of any pair shown, he tries on one. If the customer is undecided between two pairs, put on one of each pair.

In the women's shoes, the salesperson brings out "only one — the right. If my customer seems to be satisfied with its style, I try on both shoes, because the feet are often different in size. But I never show more than one pair at a time, for fear of confusing the customer. While she is looking at one pair, I may suggest other shades or styles to her, and if she seems attracted by any of them, I go and get them. And always, while I am trying on, I watch and listen to see what she is most interested in — whether style or comfort, leather or color — and I govern my choice of what to show her by what I learn."

**Gloves.** Do not show too many pairs at first, and begin with medium prices. Display them by putting next to each other shades that will harmonize rather than "clash." Lay them so that they give the best effect. When you hold them up so that the customer can see, handle them gracefully, in a pretty, dainty way. "Some girls just shove and throw the gloves around, as if they did n't care about their merchandise."

**Men's hats.** The chief point to be observed in showing

a man the hats he is interested in seems to be the method of handing him each hat for inspection. We are told not to "pass it to him right side up, but upside down, so that he puts it on before he knows what style it is. For he might dislike the style when seen off, and refuse to try it on; whereas, seeing it for the first time on his head, he will decide that he likes it."

**Men's furnishings.** Like the majority of salespeople, those who sell men's furnishings believe in "showing the best you have, at a medium price, in what is asked for." Two methods of handling shirts are suggested.

One man says: "Lay the shirts one on top of the other so that the customer gets a fair idea of all the patterns shown." But another: "Don't display shirts folded, but lay them out in such a way that the customer can see the good features of each as you point at it. Some men just throw a shirt on the counter, saying, 'That's three dollars,' and let it go at that. I think it is better to describe it as the customer looks at it, lifting it away from the others and holding it so that he can see what I am talking about. This draws out replies and comments from him, too, so that I get a better idea of what he is after." Special style features should be emphasized, and color discussed. If what you are showing is new goods, say so.

Everybody who sells ties realizes how much better they look when "demonstrated" — that is, twisted up gracefully in the fingers, simulating the knot that will be tied. A tie that is favored may be held in this shape under the customer's coat, so that he may see what it is going to look like.

**Silks and dress materials.** "No two salespeople," was the comment of one experienced saleswoman, "ever show silks exactly in the same way. We have to consider what kind of silk we are showing — whether heavy and stiff, for instance, or a soft, light weave. And we have to find out what the customer is going to use it for, too. But the

one point for young salespeople to bear in mind is that they ought to use different methods of showing for different situations, and not fall into using one way all the time."

Some of the methods suggested by this woman and others are these: after finding out as clearly as you can just what purpose the customer is buying for, and also what weight, finish, color, or pattern she has in mind, lay out several bolts, at various prices, but all medium-priced. Soon you can tell from her comments and answers what price she wants to pay. Meantime, show her a generous length of each silk, and begin to display it. That is, hold it up loosely against yourself, drawing it into folds or pleats so that it will look somewhat the way it will appear when made up. Hang it over any rack or rod that is near. Drape it on the bias if it appears to advantage that way. If it gathers softly, pucker it up in your fingers to show this. "I try to handle my silks," says one woman, "as though I liked them myself and enjoyed showing them."

Gradually you are gathering an idea of which pieces she likes better, and which ones she cares less for. Lay aside the latter, and begin to concentrate your selling talk on the more attractive pieces. Suggest ways of making up, if she is as yet undecided. If the goods are especially narrow or especially wide, show how the pattern may be laid on. Call attention to right-and-wrong, up-and-down. Sometimes you can hold a length up against the customer, if she seems to be the sort of person who will not resent this. Take her to a mirror, and drape it over her shoulder, to let her see whether the color is becoming. And always keep your method of showing, and your line of talk, directed carefully toward what she has said she wants to use the goods for.

**Table linen sold by the yard.** Pattern table linen sold by the yard is displayed flat, a large enough section of each piece being unfolded from the bolt so that the customer can see it somewhat as it will look upon her table. This

will take considerable space on the counter, and salespeople warn us not to spread it so generously as to interfere with what the others near us may be unfolding for their customers. One says: "I lay out each pattern neatly on top of the one shown just before, displaying about a yard of each for examination. Then, as the customer indicates which ones she likes best, I can turn back to them easily, folding underneath whichever she does n't care for. When she makes her selection, it is then easy to refold and put them away in such shape that they can be readily found for the next customer."

**Notions and trimmings.** Those who sell dress trimmings are usually called on to match them with dress material, which involves laying a length of each against the sample brought by the customer, and discussing with her the matter of matching or harmonizing. Buttons, thread, and spool silk are often sold in the same way. In the notion department, any one who is showing brassieres holds them up against the customer, to indicate style and size. In selling elastic by the yard, she stretches each piece to prove that it is a good one. With needles, she opens each paper to show size, eye, etc. A razor is opened and its various good features pointed out.

**Perfumes, powders, and other toilet goods.** Here we have merchandise which is usually sold in boxes or cartons, and thus cannot be taken out to show the customer. Instead, it must be kept before her eyes while it is being described and recommended. "All our brands are well known, and are generally called for by name. What we have to do is to discuss their values and merits compared with each other, so that the customer may know what she is getting. If the preparation is new on the market, we have to describe it more fully. With powder, we usually shake out a little so that the customer may get the odor, for that is what most of them are chiefly interested in. After that, they want to know about the quality."



**Art needlework and fancy goods.** In the department selling art embroidery, much of the display has to do with getting the right embroidery materials for the customer to work on. But this does not necessarily involve bringing out a great many different things for choice, since the salesperson usually knows better than the customer what is wanted, and is trusted to show only what is desired. Often the customer leaves to her entirely the choice of matching colors, and the decision as to the amount needed.

**Stationery, greeting cards, and valentines.** Writing-paper in which the customer is interested should not be left inside the case, or on the shelf, but should be brought out before her so that she may see it and feel it. If she shows particular interest in certain kinds, some from each box may be lifted out for closer examination.

Christmas and other seasonal cards should also be lifted from their boxes, in generous number. "I don't stop with showing her just two or three, but bring out all she can possibly want to see. Some look very different when seen close up."

**Watches.** "After asking the customer whether he wants a gold or a filled watch, I show three or four different makes, so as to draw from him some expression of what make he is interested in. Usually he will say as soon as I show him a few. I never show more than five or six at a time, and never leave the case while there are any on top. Others that he wishes to see he will point to, through the case. I handle each watch carefully, with the stem toward me."

**Umbrellas.** "To show umbrellas, slip off the covers and shake open. Point out the handle, selvage, and the color and quality of the fabric—they always want to know about these. Then open up wide to show the size and effect."

**Silverware.** The customer who is interested in flat silver—knives, forks, and the like—should be shown first the roll containing one fork or knife each, of all the patterns

in stock. Let her choose which ones she likes best, while you describe them, telling her their makes and names (Community, Rogers, etc.). Then get out the rest of the set in each of those patterns, so that she may see how they look together. In buying hollow ware, the customer often says in the beginning what general style she has in mind, with perhaps a mention of the price. She should then be shown several pieces at about that price, and be told anything she ought to know about each; whether sterling or plated, what other pieces she can get in the same style, etc.

**Tapestries, curtains, and other upholstery goods.** Here the salesperson must understand the principles of color harmony, so as to advise the customer what to select for use along with her furniture and rugs. "We must be able to correct the customer's mistakes tactfully, when she wishes to buy what is evidently the wrong pattern or color for her use. A woman may select a tapestry with a large figure, which looks well enough in the department, but which she will not like when she gets it home in a smaller space. People expect us to know more about our merchandise than they do, and they take our advice. We have to be able, often, to tell them how to lay out a fixed amount of money on hangings, or furniture coverings."

The only effective way to show tapestry material which is bought for covering furniture is to lay it over a chair or couch, with as nearly as possible the appearance that it will have when used. That is, it should be smoothed, and laid the right way of the goods, with the corners folded under. If several patterns are shown at one time, they should be placed far enough apart so that the effect of each may be considered separately.

Curtains and portieres should never be displayed folded, but should always be draped on the rods provided, so as to hang from about six feet up, with their lower edges even.

**Rugs and carpets.** These are not easy to display properly,

involving a good deal more care and muscular effort than some people are willing to expend. But, as with all other home-furnishings, the object of the salesman should be to show them as nearly as possible with the effect that they are going to have in the house for which they are bought. And any means taken for this end is justified in the satisfaction which it gives the customer. Men who know how to do it tell us such things as these:

“Show just as large an area of each rug as you can, by folding back a generous amount of the rug on top of it in the pile. It is better to have rugs on the floor than hanging up. No proper idea of them can be gained when they hang, for that is not the way they are to be viewed in use. Some salesmen just throw back a small corner, or show only a narrow margin of the end, but this does n't give the customer the right idea, and desirable patterns may be passed over because not enough is shown to be appreciated. Turn back the ones above enough to show two thirds or three quarters of each rug as you go over the pile.”

“Take your time about doing it. Don't hurry the customer. Many persons are so constituted that they don't see quickly. They cannot take in all the features of a rug the first time they see it, and they have to go back to it over and over again, to add to their first impressions. Women, especially, must take their time. Men are likely to decide more quickly.”

“I find out right away what color the room is for which the rug is wanted. Then I try to select appropriate colorings, stopping, as I turn the pile over, at those whose colors match or harmonize nicely with the color mentioned. I try, too, to learn whether the customer likes one with a large design or a small, and of course what price will suit best.”

“When the customer has picked out several that appeal to her, I pull them out, and spread them on the floor away from the others, at the same time asking her to go and stand on each. Viewing a rug from a distance is never so

sure a way as looking down on it as you walk across it. That is how the customer is going to live with it, anyhow, and I want her to get a very clear idea, before she buys, of how it will affect her when it is laid on her floor. Sometimes this will change her previous idea of a rug; one that she liked quite well in the pile does n't appeal to her when she looks at it from above, and another that she liked less before, will seem to be just what she has wanted."

**Ranges and stoves.** Here the salesman says: "If I do not know the customer already, and have no idea what price she wants to pay, I show the whole series of stoves or ranges in the kind she asks for. The first three or four I take her to, I select as having widely different prices, so that from her comments I can gather the price she has in mind. From then on, I show only those around the price she inclines to. I show how each is used, pointing out such things as high burners on a gas stove, open grids, improved and efficient bakers, and so on."

Ranges and stoves must be demonstrated very thoroughly in order that the customer may know not only why one is more desirable for her use than another, but also how to use hers to the best advantage after she gets it home. As you show it, open every part so that she may see it inside and out. Point out all its features, mention any special improvements that it has, indicate how it operates to secure wanted results. In short, see that she thoroughly understands how to use it. She cannot buy intelligently otherwise.

**Electrical appliances for the home.** To many women electrical appliances for the home mean chiefly a great expense, sometimes formidable. It is therefore the salesperson's duty to emphasize the immense service these render, their convenience, the many ways in which they prevent fatigue, save steps, and give better results than were obtained with the old-fashioned methods. Many an economical woman has been convinced by the right kind



of demonstration to invest in labor-saving electrical appliances which, while representing considerable outlay, are proved to be indispensable to her. Many of these appliances are very decorative, too, as well as useful. Both attractions must be clearly brought out by the salesperson, not only in her explanation, but in the way she shows the goods, as well.

“You have to show your goods as if you were really interested in them, proud of them, glad to sell them to as many women as can be persuaded to buy. Handle them as if you enjoyed it, not as if they were just something to get rid of. When you show a thing, don’t leave it on the shelf or in the case. Get it out so that the customer can handle it, see all its parts, and perhaps work it herself, under your direction. If it is a percolator that she is interested in, get down a tray also, and cream and sugar, so as to show her how the whole set looks. The percolator never looks so well standing alone.

“Keep your stock well dusted, bright, and attractively arranged. See that all labels are on. Don’t let your display stock lack the full range of sizes and styles.”

**Furniture.** “I try to get a line on the price they want to pay, without asking them, showing various pieces until they look either interested or satisfied. Then I stop and describe or demonstrate that piece, explaining all the interesting or advantageous points in its wood, workmanship, finish, giving them a chance all the time to make comments or ask questions which will suggest to me whether the piece will really be best suited to what they wish to use it for. I pull out drawers, showing the veneered or solid character of the wood. If they are hesitating between two kinds at different prices, I point out the superior points of the more expensive, comparing the two throughout, as to details of workmanship. With brass beds, I demonstrate thoroughly, even to the rail lock.”

**Mattresses and springs.** “To demonstrate a mattress,

I show that the better grades hold up better and do not acquire a ridge or hole after use. I try to find out whether the mattress is for a light or a heavy person, and similarly with springs. If the person is heavy, I advise coil springs; if light or of medium weight, flat springs.

"I believe that well-sold bedding means a good deal of business, because sleeping comfort is so important to every one. It is just as essential that bedsprings and mattresses should be suited to the body as that shoes should fit the feet."

**Talking machines.** "With talking machines, you often have to sell the *idea* to the customer before you can sell him a machine. This may mean several interviews before he decides, and it also means that you must keep in touch with him somehow — by giving him catalogues when he leaves, by calling him up when you get in some special grade of machine, or some records that you know would interest him. It is well also to keep in touch with regular customers, by telephone, as new records come in."

**Pictures.** "Showing pictures is a little harder than showing most other kinds of merchandise. It is rather like books and sheet music in the number of different things you have to know. Here we have to be able to talk intelligently about literally hundreds of artists and pictures, classical and modern, for so many of our customers are 'up' on art, and though we do not pretend to be judges, yet we have to be able to keep up with them to some extent."

**Lamps.** In showing lamps and shades, the best salespeople always take the trouble to put a bulb on any lamp that the customer is interested in, connecting with the current if it be electric, or, in the case of gas or oil, holding a lighted bulb beneath the shade, so that the effect may be given which the lamp will have when in use. Bulbs of different power should be selected, to get the kind of light the customer wants.

**China and glassware.** Pieces of china and glass that

are to be used in sets should always be shown that way, even if the customer is not buying the whole set at the time. In the case of a china tray, for instance, to be used for holding glasses, or a guest-room bedside set, the salesperson will do better to go and get the full number of pieces that the tray will hold and putting them on it, instead of just saying "six glasses," in answer to the customer's query as to size.

#### SECTION 5. HOW SALESPeOPLE "FALL DOWN" IN SHOWING GOODS

IN the foregoing sections we have been talking about proper methods of showing goods, but we shall now consider ways in which salespeople fail to show them properly. By this means we shall be able to emphasize some points that need particular attention.

**Indifference.** Salespeople fail to show goods well because they let the customer see they are indifferent. This is displayed in a number of ways. "Sometimes the girls just throw goods in front of the customer, then stand back and look off into space." "Some are too indifferent to hunt through stock for the customer. They will let her see what is out, and that's all. They seem to be thinking, 'I wish she would hurry, I'd like to get rid of her.'"

**Failure to listen.** More often than in any other way, salespeople "fall down" in showing goods by paying no attention to what the customer says. Here are a few actual — though almost incredible — cases which have been noted. The customer says, "I want to see something in a blue serge suit." The salesperson takes down from the rack two brown serge suits and one taupe. The customer says, "I wanted blue." "Oh, that's right — you did say blue!" says the salesperson.

The customer said, "I want to look at striped tub-silk waists." The salesperson opened a box and took out plain-colored tricolette, saying, "These are reduced."

"But," said the customer, "I said striped tub silk."  
"Oh, did you?" said the salesperson in a don't-care tone.

The customer said, "I want to see a wool dress with long sleeves," and the salesperson returned with two dresses, both with short sleeves, when there were plenty of long-sleeved wool dresses not three feet away.

Some salespeople prefer to show what they like instead of showing what the customer asks for. "In the shoe department the customer asked for light gray pumps. The salesman showed dark gray, because he liked it best, and then when the customer found fault he just stood there and made no attempt to go and get what she asked for."

The candy saleswoman says: "Because they don't listen and try to get an idea of what the customer wants, they just go ahead filling the box with whatever comes to their hands. To-day a girl who had been asked for a pound of walnut caramels filled the box with plain ones, not a single nut, just because she was too lazy to get what was asked for." This is illustrated also in failure to give merchandise at the right price. For instance, "If the first thing she shows is evidently too high in price or too low, she goes to the other extreme instead of going gradually down or up." Sometimes salespeople let the customer look at cheaper goods too long before they bring out better goods and begin to talk them up. Particularly is there a failure to emphasize the good points. "They let the customer look at a suit or dress without calling her attention to all the good things about it, how lovely the lining is, its style features, its smartness, etc. Any of these points might sell the garment if the customer had had them pointed out. You don't have to talk too much, but you must praise the merchandise when it deserves praise."



## SECTION 6. ILLUSTRATIONS OF "FALL-DOWNS" FROM THE SALESPeOPLE

"SHE does n't do her best to size-up the customer, to try to determine quickly what would suit best in size, price, and general style of garment. So she makes mistakes in the first things she shows and the customer does n't like it."

"She brings out a youthful style for a matronly or elderly woman, or a conspicuous color for a stout woman, or a rather settled and conservative thing for a young girl."

"She piles up a lot of garments out on the table or across the counter until the customer is so mixed up that she does n't know what to choose. On the other hand, it is possible to show so few things that the customer fails to find what she is after. Your judgment must tell you when you have reached the place where you can safely say, 'This is enough to show her.'"

"The girls who don't keep up with what is in stock often take too much of a customer's time in looking for things to show her. Or else they fail to realize that there is something else in stock similar to what she is asking for, which will do just as well. The more a girl knows about her stock, the better she can show goods."

"Intelligent talk about the goods shown is often lacking in some persons' selling — they apparently don't know enough about their stock to 'open up' on it. If the customer is experienced, all right, but as often as not, all she has to go on is what the saleswoman says. So I think we ought to take every opportunity to learn about our goods."

"She lets the customer see an attractive garment in which she has n't the customer's size, and then the customer is disappointed."

A waist, dress, skirt, or suit ought to be shown in the way that brings out its attractive features best. "Sometimes the girls do not use good judgment in this respect; they leave a dress hanging on the rack when it should be

taken down and spread out or tried on. They throw on a table a pleated plaid skirt that looks shapeless that way, but would hang beautifully if held up against the body. A waist hardly ever looks so well in its box as it does when taken out and held up, with its sleeves loose. Nice merchandise ought to have effective showing."

"Some salespeople do not get to the trying-on stage quickly enough — they show too much to the customer before they suggest trying on."

"Awkward trying-on is responsible for the loss of some sales, for few things put a customer in a bad humor sooner than being clumsily handled when she is trying to decide about a dress or hat. The saleswoman must learn to put a hat on with ease, grace, and comfort to the customer, and the same way with dresses or suits."

"If furniture salesmen are not thoroughly familiar with their stock on all parts of the floor, they may fail to be able to suggest something that is exactly what is needed for the customer who is hard to suit, but that is perhaps tucked away in a corner and not right out under their noses."

"Linen salespeople have to know a great deal about their stock in order to show it right and talk about it convincingly. Too many do not take this fact to heart as they should. We ought to know all about how linen is made, and be familiar with the exact names of all the floral and the period patterns used — the tulip and poppy, for example, and the various 'Louis' designs. We must be able to give good reasons for the price of our goods, and we must keep up with just how many different prices a certain pattern comes in, so as to be able to satisfy the customer with the grade she wants, and not just say, 'No, we have n't it at that price.' Customers are getting to know more and more about linens, and salespeople have to keep up with them — or ahead of them — if they don't want to 'fall down' in selling."

“It is wrong, in showing linens, to hand out the scarf or teacloth or towel, folded up. It should be spread out so as to show the design in its full extent. Table linen should be unfolded and laid across the counter so as to look as it will on the table.”

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What goods should be shown first?
2. How do we decide what to show?
3. What are the best ways of showing goods in the hand in your department?
4. What are the best ways of showing goods at the counter in your department?
5. What plans have you worked out for showing your goods?
6. What other plans do you find in your department or in another that you know?
7. How do salespeople “fall down” in showing goods?
8. What are your own chief weaknesses?
9. How can these be overcome? Give methods that you believe would work, in addition to those mentioned in the text.

## CHAPTER XXII

### HOW MUCH MERCHANDISE TO DISPLAY

#### SECTION I. OBSERVING THE CUSTOMER

WE cannot show merchandise to customers in a haphazard way, bringing out any goods that may happen to be on hand, on the chance that some of them may prove suitable. This would be the easiest way, but it makes the sale long and tries the patience of the customer if it does n't drive her from the store altogether. The customer's confidence in us depends, naturally, on how quickly we arrive at the idea of what she wants. If at first we show merchandise which she thinks we ought to know is absolutely unsuitable for her, she is not to be blamed for thinking that we are either uninterested or stupid.

**Observation.** We do not, therefore, usually begin the sale by showing goods that will not fit the case. Of course we cannot expect to read the mind of the customer so that we can instantly turn to the shelves and bring out what is wanted, but what we can do is to strike a sensible medium. We observe certain definite points about the customer in connection with her clothing, general appearance, her words and the tone of her voice, and her interest in the goods displayed. As we do this we keep our minds running over our stock to see what we think would be suitable for her. This means that we decide from all these points that one line will not be satisfactory, while possibly another line may. Then when we bring out some appropriate line, we see that perhaps something other than the one we have shown would be better for the customer, and proceed to get it.

**Discrimination.** This means that while with our ears and eyes we are finding out what the customer wants, we are at



the same time with our minds running over the goods in the department and saying to ourselves, "There is no use showing that line. Possibly this will do. Certainly I ought to show that." This shows the importance of the salesman's knowledge of his stock in making a discriminating selection. In other words, we use *observation* to size-up the customer, and *discrimination* to decide what part of our stock we shall show. It is this that salespeople mean when they say, "Showing goods right does n't necessarily mean profuse showing. It does n't mean we ought to bring out a lot of goods right away. It does mean that we ought to bring out only such as we decide will probably be of interest to the customer, judging from what we have found out about her."

From an inexperienced salesperson comes a description of a method of showing goods which illustrates very well some of the ways in which many "fall down" in the matter of judging how much to show. She says: "I always bring out the whole line, right away. If I don't, the customer is likely to say, 'Are those all the scarfs you have?' and then I have to get the whole lot out, anyway. So I always get out right away every scarf I can lay my hands on. Ours are always kept in one case, and if she sees the case is empty, she knows I am showing her everything I have." This is clearly a salesperson of very poor powers of discrimination.

## SECTION 2. RULES

THERE is no ironclad rule that can be laid down as to how many pieces of merchandise to show at once, for the matter depends a great deal upon the kinds of merchandise. Each salesperson must learn for himself what is the best thing to do in his particular department. Clearly the furniture salesman whose merchandise is displayed in such a way that the customer can see all there is for sale will tell us one thing, while the Victrola salesman, whose records are kept in cases from which they have been taken in order that the customer may try them, will tell us another.

There are, however, some general principles which govern our decision as to how much merchandise to show the customer at first, and these seem to fall into two groups.

(a) Show enough merchandise at a time

1. To give the customer a sufficient choice, so that she will have more than one or two from which to select.
2. To indicate to her that we are interested and will cheerfully show her all she needs to see.
3. To give ourselves a better chance of hitting on something she will like.
4. To avoid taking more steps than should be needed in going back and forth to get more goods because we have not brought out enough at first.

(b) But bring out only a few carefully chosen samples, because

1. On seeing them the customer is likely to make comments which will indicate her likes and dislikes, and suggest to us what should be shown next, so that we can make progress toward suiting her.
2. If we show half a dozen, none of which suits, she is likely to lose patience because we have not more accurately judged what she wants. If, however, she sees one or two, she does not expect to be entirely satisfied immediately and will make some remarks about them for our further information.
3. If we bring out a great many, we are likely to confuse her. She does not know which she likes and she tends to forget what she had in mind when she came.
4. Too many goods on the table or counter at once will soon look disorderly. The goods may suffer damage.

There are those who assert that all the goods should be brought out at once, chiefly from the mistaken idea that the customer will not be satisfied unless she sees everything; but for the reasons given above, it is apparent that the customer may become confused just in the same way that a diner becomes confused when he has a long bill of fare put before him and is in doubt about what to select. The argument made by those who favor bringing out all goods at once is that, "If we don't bring out the whole line, she is likely to say, 'Is *that* all you have?' But if she does say this, it is a good thing. It would be better if she were to have to say it over and over again every few minutes while we kept bringing out more goods, a few at a time, and putting away or laying aside as we brought out the new."

Contrast the effects of these two processes upon her mind. We show her two or three handbags, perhaps. A few minutes later we open the drawer or unlock the case and bring out two more, laying aside the first bags, while, still later, from another place we produce a few others. By this time she has the idea that there are bags in every box and drawer on our side of the counter, but that we are bringing out only what will please *her*. She gains the impression that the department really has an unlimited stock this season. Our moderation in showing bags, combined with our cordial willingness to keep on showing more, suggests inexhaustible treasures.

If, on the other hand, we show everything we have at once, she feels we have no discrimination, and, as we have said, she becomes confused and hardly knows what to buy. It therefore seems to be the consensus of opinion among experts that it is better for us to manifest willingness to serve, to observe the customer, and to find out what will please her, but to show her with discrimination a small number of articles at a time.

## SECTION 3. WHEN TO STOP SHOWING GOODS

SOME customers fail to buy because not enough goods are shown, while others fail to buy because they see too much. Sometimes after the sale is made, it is lost. The following suggestions are made by expert salespeople:

*First*, we should not stop showing fresh goods as long as the customer cannot seem to make up her mind. It may be that she will choose something from many articles already before her, or it may be that nothing exactly suits her and she must see more. At any rate, we must keep on talking up the selling points of one or another until she can decide. We can tell that she is still unsatisfied if she keeps picking up and laying down, first one thing and then another. She continues to ask questions about this and that. She tries on garments all over again. Her hands move uncertainly from one to another.

In the *second* place, it would seem unnecessary to say that as soon as the customer makes up her mind that she wants whatever she has been looking at, the salesperson should not show anything further; and yet some girls do keep on as if they had not heard. This is a mistake because it naturally irritates the customer.

*Third*, if we are showing goods at various prices, having started lower than the price the customer originally mentioned, it seems wiser not to show any goods above that price after we reach it.

*Fourth*, some salespeople believe that the instant the customer begins to show signs of being restless or bored, it is time to stop bringing out goods.

*Fifth*, when the customer unconsciously returns to an article, takes it up, looks at its various features, asks repeated questions about it, or tries it on several times, we can be sure that we have shown enough goods, and that we may concentrate upon the articles already shown. Various ideas are expressed by salespeople as follows: "If she tries



on the hat three times, it is sold." "Sometimes if I cannot seem to satisfy her, I go back to an article I showed early in the sale without any evidence from her that it attracted her, and when I bring it out again as if this were its first appearance, it strikes her as something new and it may satisfy her." "You reach the stopping point in hats fairly soon, because for each type of customer there are only a certain number of hats which are suitable. She really has to decide between those. Unless she insists on seeing more, it is better to indicate that those before her make up her range of choice. If she wishes to see more, then it is only a matter of putting others on her head to prove to her that they are not of the sort that will suit her." "If she is undecided, I can sometimes quickly put away most of the things and persuade her to make up her mind about the goods which are before her."

#### SECTION 4. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE SALESPEOPLE

IN the quotations which follow, it will be noted that those from salespeople selling *smaller articles* indicate the wisdom of bringing out *more* at a time than do the quotations from salesmen selling *larger merchandise*. It will also be noted that garments which have to be tried on should be shown in smaller numbers at a time.

**Books.** "We find it best here to bring to the customer five or six of the sort she wants to see. I do not consider that too many, and certainly we should be wasting time if we were to bring only one at a time. It does not seem to confuse the customer to have a good many books lying under her hand for her to look at."

**Boys' and young men's clothing.** "One suit only, at first, and this largely to get an idea of the style and the size that are wanted. Therefore I try to get the young man to try on the first suit, explaining that even if it is n't what he had in mind, it will give me an idea as to his size. And this usually makes him say something about weight

or cut that helps me to know what to bring out next. 'I want something a good deal better than this,' he will say, or, 'Give me something with more snap to it — I like to look up-to-the-minute.' The only time I bring out more than one is when I can't seem to tell from the boy's appearance whether he wants the latest thing or a style that is more conservative, so then I bring out one of each to get his comments.

"When our stock is low, I am careful not to bring out any style that I am not sure we have his size in, for it does n't do to get him liking a suit, and then find that we have only one or two sizes left in it, and not his. So at first I bring out some model that we have full sizes in."

**Corsets.** "We find it better not to show more than one style at first, talking to the customer about it for a minute, then going off for another while she examines what is before her. She has a better chance this way to look it over carefully, and be ready with questions for me when I return with another. It is n't easy to show corsets right if you have too many on the counter at once."

**Furs.** "I don't believe in showing too many at once. I prefer to bring out only a few, and get those tried on so as to see what she likes. If you bring out a lot, she gets bewildered and forgets what ideas she had when she came, and cannot tell you which she likes and which she does n't.

"From the first few I gather what she wants, by noting her comments and questions about the style, price, and so on, of what she is trying on. I try then to bring out others that will not have the points she objected to, and will have those that she liked in the first two or three. That is, I try to show judiciously rather than indiscriminately, which would just waste her time and mine, and get us nowhere. Even when I get out the first ones, I try to find something whose lines would suit her figure in as near her size as we have, and of a fur that will be becoming to her type. Also I try to show out of regular stock, so as to avoid the neces-

sity of special orders. Showing two or three with these considerations in mind is more effective in making a sale than showing a dozen would be, if you did it carelessly."

**Women's gloves.** "I try to find out first what color she wants, and whether the gloves are to be for dress or for street wear. Then what I bring out is about two pairs in each of two shades, the four or five between them representing high, low, and medium prices. Then her comments tell me which she wants to see more of, and by that time it is all right to bring out a good many more, so as to make that second trip do. Planning this way saves steps and prevents running back and forth behind the other girls, yet it tells the customer that I am willing to show her plenty of different kinds."

**Handkerchiefs.** "I bring out first one large box, and pull out one of each kind in it, spreading them out neatly on top of the box while I am talking about them. Then, if she wants to see others, I push that pile to one side and bring out another box. I try to show her all the variety she could want, without getting too many under her hand at once."

**Women's neckwear.** "Not too many at once, is my policy. I bring out three or four sets, or three or four collars at first. If she is buying to fit the dress or suit she has on, I can go by that in choosing what shapes to show her. Otherwise I have to wait for her first comments to get an idea of the shape she needs. If she does n't care for these, then I lay them aside, and get more."

**Hosiery.** "I take out one box of the size mentioned; or, if the customer has not named size, I take out 9½ for women and 10½ for men. If this style does not prove suitable, I show another. If one definite style has been asked for, I show only that; while if the customer is n't decided, I bring out two or three different styles, but not more, at first."

**Millinery.** "It is an absolute rule in this department

not to show more than three hats to begin with, nor more than that, at once, at any time during the sale. We really prefer to keep it down to two. Having a lot piled up together in front of the customer looks cheap. The customer cannot see the good points of each when so many are close together. Then, the table gets to looking untidy, and the customer becomes confused, and the hats themselves are likely to be tossed around and spoiled. We let the customer see two or three and pick out the one she likes best; then we lay aside the others and get out two or three more for her to try on."

**Men's clothing.** "Of course the first suit or coat you bring out — and I never bring out more than one in the beginning — is supposed to be just for trying on, to get the size. But I don't choose that one in any haphazard way. You get the customer's confidence a lot more quickly when you learn to estimate his size from looking at him so that even that first coat you bring out is exactly his size. He thinks you know your business. And you want to find out how to size-up the style he probably likes to wear, too, so as not to bring out first a model that he will think out of the question, for if he's a certain kind of man he will lose confidence in you right off.

"I don't believe in showing half a dozen suits at once. It's this way: If you make one bad guess — that is, if the one suit you bring out at first is n't right — he won't have so much ground to find fault. But if you bring out half a dozen, and all of them are wrong, he gets disgusted and goes off. It is better to risk just one at first and get his reactions on that; then the rest that you show will get nearer and nearer his idea, so that he gets more and more interested. Gradually you reach the point where he is satisfied, and your sale is made. But it would n't have been if you had shown him too much stock to start with."

**Men's furnishings.** "To give sufficient variety for choice, we show three or four at first — not more than that, or the



customer will get confused. I pick out one or two like what he has on, and one or two that are new or quite popular. Of course, the customer wants to see enough so that he will have a fair range of choice, and you don't want to appear unwilling to show all the goods he needs for choosing; but mistakes are n't made so often in that direction as in the direction of piling too great an amount of merchandise before him, so that he does n't know what he is looking at. Often the customer will say, 'Well, it is somehow rather hard to decide,' when so many are spread out.

"As most of our goods are kept in cabinets, I find I can have a good many out at once without any muss or disorder, because there are no boxes to get in the way of the goods. When I get out a pile, I never show the *top* article, which may not be fresh, but instead I pull out one from beneath. This shows the customer that I am anxious to sell him the best of our stock, and it gives him a better impression of the stock, too."

**Office supplies.** "I show only one of the kind of thing the customer wants, at first, so as to get his comments on size, style, price, etc. Then I say, 'Of course, we have higher-priced kinds, too, if you would like to see them,' and I may bring out others. But at first I show only one."

**Picture frames.** "In showing ready-made frames, I choose first the kind that I think best suited, in color, wood, and size, to the picture the customer has brought. After that I bring out two or three others, of different tone, but still of the correct dimensions. I don't show more than that, but I try to get a variety, all suitable. It gives the customer confidence if you show first a frame that she can see exactly fits and suits her picture. So I don't pick my first frame at random. The result of this care is that I usually end by selling either the first or the second frame I showed, even if I have gone through a lot of stock at her request."

**Ribbons.** "Often here it is a question of matching, so we have to bring out a good many, even at first. I show all the

widths we have in the color asked for, and a good many shades. My customers seem to appreciate that indication of interest and attention, so I like to show a good variety. But I try to keep them separate on the counter, so as not to confuse."

**Suits and dresses.** "Never more than three or four at first, and never more than that at any time during the sale, for I keep laying aside those we don't want, so as to avoid confusion. If she does n't like what we try on first, I get others and bring them to her in the fitting-room, until she finds what she wants."

"I do not bring out more than two or three at first. If the customer is one that I have waited on often enough before, I may remember her size and her tastes, and can save wasted effort by getting right away what will probably be more or less satisfactory. If I do not know her, I bring out a suit in a shade that looks becoming, and in a style with suitable lines, and at a medium price. Then I can tell from her remarks whether she likes this color and model, and whether the price suits her. All this I can do much better if I have only one or two suits out for her to talk about. Then what I get out next will depend on what she has said about these."

"At first I bring out just one. The customer looks it over and begins to talk about what there is in it that pleases her and what there is she does n't care for. Then I go back to the stock-room, and though I may bring out half a dozen, I do not take them over to her, but lay them on a table or chair, out of her reach. Then, as I begin to show these, I hang them up before her, one by one, letting her take in each and talking about its good points as she examines it. Meanwhile the sight of the others on the chair shows her that I am ready to let her see all she wants. I gradually get her ideas, and remove those that she is not interested in, keeping the more suitable hanging near her. It is then time to suggest trying on. But I think you get

the best idea of what your customer really wants by showing her only one dress first, and letting her express herself about that before going on to get out more."

"I first bring the customer over to where the stock is that she wants to see — coats or skirts or suits, whatever she has mentioned. If she evidently wants to sit down where she is, then I bring the garments over to her, instead, two or three at first, hanging them up before her one at a time, and listening to what she says before I go back for others. If she comes with me to where the stock hangs, I show her just one suit at first, hanging it before her, and waiting for her comments. This is so that, if she has any particular preference in mind, the first suit will call it out, and I'll know what to bring next without asking her any direct question."

"If you bring out a lot of suits at once, in the beginning, she is not likely to say anything one way or another, I find. She just waits for you to bring out more, yet you scarcely know whether she likes or dislikes what you have just shown. If you can, you want to get her to express her ideas on color, material, size, price, general style, etc., within the first few minutes, while you are showing the first or second suit."

**Sweaters.** "I bring out one of each style and color in the general kind she asks for, keeping most of them on one side until we are ready for them, and showing to her at first only three or four. I like her to see that there are plenty for her to choose from, so that if she is the kind that wants to see everything you have in stock, she can be satisfied. On the other hand, I don't put them all before her at one time, because that would confuse her."

**Waists.** "Our waists are piled by sizes. I determine what size the customer needs and get out the pile in that size; I begin to show from it, unfolding each waist and holding it up, talking about it as I do this. If, at a certain style (round neck and short sleeves, for instance) she says,

'No, I never wear that kind,' I lay it aside and do not show any more like that when I come to them in the pile. I try not to have the pile directly in front of the customer, but keep a clear space, so that she does n't see more than two or three at once. If she is hard to suit, and I have to take out another pile, I lay on one side those we have looked at, and, farther away, those she has not liked, so that we can keep before us the few she has liked best."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. How can discrimination in showing goods be practiced?
2. What are the rules which tell us the smallest amount of merchandise to show?
3. What are the reasons for not showing too much merchandise?
4. Why is it better to show goods a few at a time?
5. How do you know when to stop showing goods?
6. What troubles do you have in knowing when to stop showing goods?
7. Get the opinion of other people in the department on this point.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE SELLING TALK

#### SECTION I. WHAT ARE TALKING POINTS?

As the sale progresses, the conversation about the goods must — from the salesman's point of view — center around what are known as "talking points."

The meaning of "talking points" or "values." In order to understand what these are, we need to recall the customer's visit to the store. She has certain needs which she wishes to satisfy by means of goods which she hopes to find in the store. She wants to get the best merchandise possible for her money, and in trying to get this she considers a large number of points — or "values" — as she looks at the goods. In buying shoes, for instance, she thinks about durability, fashion, and fit, and when she wants to know how durable, or how fashionable, the shoes are which she is examining, the salesperson can be of assistance in giving her the information.

These "values" as explained by the salesman constitute the talking points of the sale. Considering all the departments in a great store, there are a large number of talking points, with which salespeople must be familiar; for instance, in textiles we probably have as many as ten. Since talking points are of so much importance it will be advisable to describe what these values are.

In the case of many articles the customer is interested in their *appearance*, or beauty. Other customers are interested in the *quality* of the articles, and by this they mean the workmanship, the quality of raw materials, etc. *Style* is a value highly desired in women's clothes, and to a certain extent in men's also, as well as in some other kinds of merchandise like dress accessories. The

*becomingness* of clothing is a matter of great importance to customers. Probably most of us are interested in *durability* because we wish the merchandise to wear as long as we have use for it; with some merchandise, however, durability is a secondary consideration. Customers ask, too, about *serviceability*, — how many different uses the merchandise may be good for. *Comfort* is a quality which is often desirable. The *price* may be important, as when a customer wishes to obtain something at the lowest possible cost without regard to other values. In the case of many kinds of merchandise bought for the home, the point of *practical convenience* is important — whether the article is built not only for durability and service, but also for ease and convenience in putting together, taking apart and cleaning; whether its operating cost is moderate, whether it does its work silently and efficiently. Finally, what may, be called *sentiment* is to be considered a value, as when people pay more to obtain an antique desk or hand-made lace — just because it *is* antique, or hand-made, though the untrained eye might have difficulty in distinguishing it from modern, or from machine-made.

When the customer enters the store she has in mind one or several of these values, and while she is making up her mind, she wants to find out just how the goods which she is considering will furnish the values that she is looking for. So the salesperson must know enough about the raw material used in his wares, their manufacture and finish, current styles, the principles of home decoration, house-keeping processes, and the like, to be able to present effectively the talking points of the goods being examined. He should be able, for instance, to tell why the particular kind of leather in this pair of shoes will wear longer than the leather in that pair, and to explain why one is more fashionable than another. He must also know enough about the workmanship on both pairs to be able to demonstrate differences. So, in ready-to-wear, he should be able to

explain the exact reason why one suit is more expensive than another, pointing to differences in manufacture, in material, in line, in color, and so on. If he is talking to a woman buying new furnishings for her home, he must know how to show her that this davenport is preferable to that, this refrigerator more suitable for her purpose, this Oriental rug more desirable though more expensive. The values that he explains in each case are his talking points.

## SECTION 2. WHAT TALKING POINTS ARE THERE IN YOUR GOODS?

EVERY department has to make up its own list of talking points for its own goods. Those in house-furnishings are not the same as those in ready-to-wear, because both the values to be obtained and the merchandise itself are different.

In order to ascertain the talking points for any merchandise, the salesperson must do four things. *First*, she should list the values which customers seek in these goods. The values named for ready-to-wear are an illustration. In other departments some of these same values are found, and others must be added; as, for instance, the fit of shoes. *Second*, she should go over each item of merchandise that she sells, and put to herself the questions, "What talking points does this article possess?" "What is there about the material or the method of manufacture which gives it special claim to durability or usefulness or beauty or becomingness?" Although to the inexperienced salesperson this may appear an almost staggering job, the fact of the matter is that as time goes on, we get so used to the facts about our goods that we recognize their various values easily. But it is true that many salespeople, even the most experienced, have at one time or another gone over every article in their stock, point by point, with the buyer or with some older salesperson who had more in-

formation, in order to begin their acquaintance with its values.

### SECTION 3. APPLYING THE TALKING POINTS TO THE CUSTOMER

THESE first two steps may be taken independently of the customer, to get ready for her when she comes. The *third* step occurs when she actually enters. It becomes necessary then to apply what we have learned to the particular needs of the customer, by noting all points which especially appeal to her individually. We observe whether she is interested in style, in workmanship, in appearance, or in durability, because when we know which values are of most importance to her we shall be able to stress those and help her to come to a decision which will satisfy her. Some women want the very latest novelty and do not care at all whether it is in good taste, or whether it will last very long, or will go with the rest of their clothes or their home-furnishings. On the other hand, some customers prefer not to be in the very latest fashion, and ask for some model which will be good year in and year out. How we find out what they are especially looking for has already been discussed.

The appearance and dress of the customer frequently give clues as to her tastes. If she wears good things, well chosen in fabric and workmanship, becoming and in good taste, if she is well-groomed in appearance, then we can usually assume that she will be interested in quality and, in general, will want the better type of merchandise. (In selling wearing apparel we cannot always go by this, for she may be dressed by a dressmaker with knowledge and taste, while she herself has little of either.) Close attention to her expression will frequently reveal the qualities in which she is most interested; the various methods of reading the expression of the face have already been described. Particularly her conversation, her comments on the goods



shown, her questions and objections, give us a line upon the values which she thinks are of most importance. In short, the methods of discovering the values which appeal to customers are those described in the chapter on sizing-up.

#### SECTION 4. HOW TO STATE YOUR TALKING POINTS

THE *fourth* step in using talking points successfully is to pay attention to the customer's personal attitude and reactions. The mere statement of talking points is not always sufficient to make them convincing. If the customer has confidence in the opinion of the salesperson, greater weight will be given to what he says. If she is of the friendly type, the talking points will have greater weight if given in a friendly manner, while if she is more business-like, a clear-cut and business-like statement of talking points will be more effective.

Again, if the customer has a thorough knowledge of goods, we shall not present our talking points in the same way that we should with an inexperienced buyer. Young housewives, for example, are usually very willing to be advised about the furnishings of their homes and about kitchen contrivances; to them we may explain quite freely. On the other hand, the experienced housewife, who has had a home for years and knows a good deal about the uses and mechanism of the articles which she purchases, cannot be talked to as though she were a beginner. Technical points are the ones to discuss. A china saleswoman says: "If my customer shows by her talk that she knows a good deal about china, and she seems friendly, I can keep right up to her in a technical talk and the sale is a pleasure to both. The woman who comes in in a sealskin coat, however, and asks for a deep-cut bowl at a low price, I handle differently. I realize that I had better just talk up the cheaper goods without saying much about the quality or the manufacturing process." When the customer is not only experienced, but is also careful, the sales-

person must be able to answer such questions as, "How do you know this is a good brand?" "Are these goods seconds?" "Can you recommend this as just as good as the kind you carried last year?" All such questions indicate the necessity of being very accurate and sure in our talk about the goods.

**Summary.** In building up a list of talking points and handling them effectively, four things are necessary. In the *first* place, the values which customers seek in articles in the department should be listed; in the *second* place, the merchandise in the department should be gone over item by item to see which of these values each most fully provides; in the *third* place, when customers enter the department they should be sized-up to learn the values upon which they lay the most stress; and, in the *fourth* place, in presenting the talking points attention should be paid not only to the values which appeal most strongly, but to the personal characteristics of the customer, so that the arguments may be put in the most telling way.

#### SECTION 5. SUGGESTIONS FROM THE SALESPeOPLE

THE following suggestions are given in the salespeople's own words:

"I think that, while you get most of your ideas of how to talk from the way each customer acts and talks at the time, yet there is always in every department a certain line of special talk that you have to use for that kind of goods. Here in china we practically always emphasize the amount of hard usage that any set can be expected to stand, for durability is an important point in china. Then, we try to find out whom it is intended for, and what sort of tastes we ought to try to please, and whether color, or pattern, or price is the most important thing."

"If I see that the customer is getting the least bit snippy, I quit talking so much. I see that she does n't like it, and that I am probably hurting my sale. I am guided, too,

by whether I have confidence in the line she is looking at. If I am sure it would be good for her purpose, then I can talk better than if I don't think it's the right thing."

"I watch the customer's questions and comments, to see whether she is more interested in the quality of the linen, or the pattern, or the price. When I find out, I talk up that point. I use some medium-priced goods as a feeler, and then when I find out whether she wants higher or lower, I use the selling points that I have found successful for that grade."

"I show several pieces so as to see whether she prefers a plain or a fancy pattern. Then I show others like it, justifying the price of each by telling its best points. If she says she wants to look elsewhere, I say, 'All right. Glad to have you do it, because you know by now that we have the best.'"

"You can tell whether they are more interested in color or quality or price by the way they handle the goods, and by the questions they ask. When they are silent or bashful, I ask them questions. If they object to the price, I always have some facts ready in justification — exclusive styles, or extra-fine quality."

"Sometimes the customer can be persuaded to buy if you tell her of the use to which the goods have been put elsewhere. I got a big sale once by remembering that it was the same drapery material that had been ordered for the redecorating of one of our big hotels, and telling the customer."

"One of the points I keep always ready to talk about is the lines of stock that we especially want to get rid of at the time. I post myself on all the selling points of these and lead the conversation around to them just as often as I think there is any chance of selling them."

"I try to make every question I ask call attention to some good point in what I am showing. You kill two birds with one stone, that way. And when she asks for my opinion,

I tell her what I think she wants me to say, if I can possibly do this honestly. I won't tell her that she looks well in everything; that would be silly, and she won't believe it if she has any sense. I think it is safer to be perfectly frank, without being uncomplimentary, and tell her which one she really looks best in, and which kinds are better for other types of women."

"If the customer is silent, you must pump her, ask questions, do anything to make her express an opinion. 'Do you like snug-fitting gloves?' 'Are these for yourself or for a gift?' 'Are they to be for business or for dress wear?' If you are very polite, and keep smiling, you will finally hit a question which will draw her out and make the sale easy."

"You often have to keep suggesting different things, for the customer may have asked for a certain thing without really wanting that, but just because she thinks it's the only thing there is. While if you know your stock well, you may be able to talk up something else that she does not know of, and satisfy her much better with that. The other day a girl asked for neckwear by the yard for a round-neck dress, and specified tabs. She looked at them rather discontentedly, saying that she supposed she would have to take them because they were the only thing that would curve, but she was very tired of them, having seen them so much. So then I brought out a pretty pleated lace that was much newer, and curved perfectly, and she was so glad to take that instead."

"Here in the men's shoe department you don't have to be 'guided in what to say' very much. The main thing with men is to get their size in the shoe they ask for, and give it to them in a hurry. They don't want to waste time talking or hearing you talk. As to talking in order to persuade them to take this or that, there is n't much choice to talk up in men's shoes. They are entirely different from women's. There is so much less variety in the styles.



Really, the only choice is between high and low, brown and black. A man knows, when he comes in, what he wants. Your business is to give it to him."

"It's his actions and comments that guide me in talking while I'm showing a man a suit. I bring out one that I think he ought to have, and then show him two or three others, different, so as to point out why he ought to take the first, and then I listen to his objections, so that I can either show him something different or else prove to him that his objections are wrong. I watch to see when his expression is pleased, and also to see what he seems to take an interest in. And I talk on the basis of that."

"If she has told me the particular point she is looking for, then I know what to talk up when I show her the waist. If she does n't say, then I watch to note whether she looks first at the grade of goods, or the style, or the way it is trimmed. I go then by her questions, her comments when she tries it on, and the points she seems most interested in."

"As soon as I feel that I have won the customer's confidence, I let the sale rest a minute, so as to let her think. Perhaps I say something about the weather, or about the child she has with her. Then she will come back to the suit again, and say, 'Well, I don't know exactly what to decide about this.' And then I can start my selling talk all over again. But by waiting a little, I have shown her that I am not pressing her or pushing the sale. I never say or do anything that will seem to hurry a customer."

"I never ask questions to start a sale. I just bring out a coat for the boy, to make sure of his size, and I try it on. Then I bring out other materials and patterns for contrast, and settle myself to listen to comments and objections. That is how I learn what points to talk up."

"For one thing, I always say what I honestly think, if the customer asks me for my opinion. I am governed by my knowledge of the merchandise, and my idea as to what will suit which person. These, with the customer's questions,

comments, and manner during the sale, are my guides in knowing what to say and how to say it."

"In selling talking machines it depends on what the customer acts as if she would rather have — whether I had better talk about the artists and the composer, etc., or whether I had better stick to playing, and let her do the talking."

"Whatever you say, I think you have to adopt an authoritative manner, as if you meant what you said and knew what you were talking about. If you do this, the customer has more confidence in what you say."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by "talking points"? Illustrate.
2. Mention some of the talking points for: tennis racquets, a reading-lamp, a carpet-sweeper, pictures, books.
3. How can the talking points of goods be discovered?
4. Does the result of your "size-up" of the customer influence you in your choice of talking points? How?
5. Take any three articles with which you are familiar and show how you would vary your talking points for (a) an inexperienced buyer, (b) an experienced buyer.
6. Have you ever failed to buy from one salesperson because she did not stress the proper talking points about merchandise, and then purchased the same goods from another salesperson who did bring out those points? Give a case in point.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### WHEN AND HOW TO MENTION PRICE

#### SECTION I. GENERAL RULES

THERE is a natural tendency on the part of new salespeople to regard the price of the merchandise they sell as so important that it is to be mentioned promptly and openly to each customer, but experience teaches discretion, and they soon learn that such a practice is often far from wise. Curious as it may seem to some of us, many customers do not care much, or prefer to *seem* not to care much, what the article they are purchasing costs, and some are even offended if price is even mentioned. So experience teaches us that we have two kinds of customers — those who prefer not to have price mentioned, and those to whom price is an important consideration and who therefore want to know it. There are, therefore, some situations in which it is satisfactory to mention the price of what we show, and others in which we will do better to ignore it.

Certain observations are made by our experts. The *first* is that it is never wise to ask the customer bluntly what price he had thought of paying. He may not care, he may not have given any thought to it, or he may have expected to make up his mind only after seeing the merchandise. If he has made up his mind, he will tell us without asking. In the *second* place, it is safer to wait to mention the price until the customer has asked about it directly. Salespeople get around the difficulty in the following ways: “I always let the customer ask the price, and as often as possible I even avoid mentioning it by dropping the sales-ticket before her so that she cannot help seeing it. Then, if she is sensitive about what she can afford to pay, since price has not been mentioned, she cannot take offense.

If she wants a better grade, she can say so, while if she wants something less expensive, she will mention something about the goods which suggests that fact. If she still does n't see the tag and asks the price, I tell her." Another one says, "If I see my customer hunting for the price tag, I pick it up and either show it to her or read it to her, but I never ask her what she wants to pay." "Usually," says a third salesperson, "I wait until the customer turns the ticket over and sees the price. Our tags are large and plain, so it is not necessary for her to ask."

*Third*, when the customer has stated frankly how much she expects to pay, then there is no objection to stating the price of each article. "With the customer who says at once she does n't want to go above a certain price which she names, I bring out various articles at about that figure, mentioning the price of each and not going much above it, except in the case of some special merchandise or reduced goods whose value is so much greater that she may be tempted to pay a little more."

*Fourth*, when advertised goods are shown, the customers can usually be counted on to be interested in their price, and therefore many salespeople in that case name the price when they bring out the goods. As one salesperson says, "I never mention price except on reduced articles when the price is obviously the main attraction."

*Fifth*, men usually prefer to have the price mentioned, we are told. "Men don't understand values the same way women do," says a clothing salesman. "Women can tell just by looking at a suit about what it costs, but a man who has been shown a forty-five-dollar suit is likely to think that all the other suits you show him afterward are also forty-five dollars. Then if he picks out a sixty-dollar suit because he likes it better than the first you showed, he gets disgusted because it is n't forty-five dollars too. It saves embarrassment for him and the salesman too if we mention price of each as we try it on. We don't need to un-



derline it, you know — just mention it casually.” There are times when great care must be taken in the matter of mentioning the price, even among men. With those who are accustomed to spending money freely, and to regarding the quality of the merchandise as being the prime consideration, it does not really matter whether the price is twenty-five dollars or one hundred and twenty-five dollars, provided the article is what they really want. Our eagerness to mention price may seem offensive to them — as though we were jumping at the conclusion that they were out for a bargain and wanted to save money rather than to get something nice.

“With this kind of person,” says one man, “I use a light and airy manner when I reach the matter of price. I say, ‘It is the seventy-five-dollar one you want, then?’ or, ‘I am to charge the two-hundred-dollar one to your account, I suppose?’ in my most casual manner, as if spending two hundred dollars were something I did every lunch-time myself.”

*Sixth*, in general, just as it is safe with the average customer not to mention price until it is asked, so it is safer with those who buy the most expensive goods, even when they are shopping among low-priced merchandise, not to mention price as if it were an important consideration, but just to throw it in casually on the tail of another remark. Some salespeople use this casual manner in all cases and with any kind of customer. “This is a splendid pair of shoes for only ten dollars,” or, “We have some unusually nice shades in silk sweaters now for twenty-five dollars — here is one of them.” “If I know, or guess,” says a salesperson in ready-to-wear, “that my customer has a good deal of money, I don’t mention price until I have shown quite a number of dresses, and then all I say is, ‘Yes, it is an unusually smart model for eighty-five dollars,’ as if it were smartness that we were both interested in, and not price.”

*Seventh*, in yard goods it seems to be the opinion that

it is necessary for the price to be clearly understood and accepted by the customer. For if, after she has said she will take such and such a length, and we have cut it off, she finds it has cost much more than she thought, and decides not to take it after all, the department has to stand the loss in the remnant. To avoid this we say, "A yard and a half of this green ribbon. That will be four dollars and fifty cents. Will you take it with you?" This gives the customer a chance to learn the price and make her objection then if she is going to make it at all, before the ribbon is cut.

## SECTION 2. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE SALESPeOPLE

"IN buying handkerchiefs, our customers seem to care first about quality rather than cost, so I always let them ask the price before I state it. We can't judge by customers' clothes, here, because often a very plainly dressed woman, who evidently cannot spend much money on expensive larger things, will treat herself to excellent handkerchiefs."

"I watch to see whether the price is a ruling factor in my customer's decision, determining this by her objections or her hesitation over what I show. If these seem to be on the ground of quality, then I show something better; if on the ground of cost, I bring out something cheaper."

"If I know my customer, having waited on her often before, I bring out goods at the price I know she usually pays, and do not mention the price until she asks it."

"In showing hosiery, if the customer has set the price she wishes to pay, I bring out a box and mention its price as I show each pair. But if she has only said what color she wants, then I do not mention the price until she decides to buy, unless she asks in the meantime. I may say that this is the only price we have in hose of that shade; or if we have several prices in the color she wants, I show them all, naming the price of each."

"It seems better to talk up the quality of the article you are showing, before letting the price enter in, so as to create a desire on the customer's part for that article, and so make the price seem less important when you get to it."

"With some merchandise — for instance, picture frames — there are other considerations actually more important than the price. A customer wants us to show her frames that will suit her picture, whether ready-made or other. We pick out what is needed in the way of moulding, and the price is secondary."

The same salesman says, as to selling pictures: "The price is on the front of every picture, showing plainly, so I don't usually mention it — at any rate, never at first. I generally let the customer ask. By her expression you can often tell whether what you are showing is more than she can afford. If she lingers a long time over a picture, and hesitates, though finding no fault with it, I often say, 'That's a wonderful print for ten dollars.' If this does n't bring forth any comment, I go on to suggest, 'We have a copy of this in a cheaper print, if you would care to see it.' And then I compare the two, to try to find out which she wants to buy."

"I find out, in general, the price a customer wants to pay for knit underwear by my first question as to the kind wanted — whether wool, silk, or cotton, and whether light or heavy weight."

"In selling bathrobes and negligees you can get a line on what the customer expects to pay by finding out whether she wants silk or cotton — though, of course, there are many grades in each, and you get a better idea as you go on showing various grades and listening to what she says."

"With dress goods we find it well to mention the price of each piece casually as we show it, never asking the customer, however, what she wants to pay."

"Here in the upholstery, the customers don't seem to

mind, as in other departments, having the question of price raised frankly. A customer will often ask for 'some cheap cretonne,' and when we say, 'Something at about fifty cents or less?' she does n't resent it as she might in departments where they sell more *personal* things."

In various departments where merchandise is often bought for gifts or for club prizes, it seems possible for the salesperson, as soon as the fact is brought out that the purchase is to be a prize, to ask what amount is to be spent for it. "Often a woman is buying with joint funds and has just so much to spend. Then we can ask her frankly what her limit is. And it is sometimes possible also, with a gift. We can ask, in a very polite way, whether she has any particular amount in mind that she would like to spend."

"It is a rule in the furniture department not to ask the customer about the price; but if she finds fault with what is shown her, on the ground of price, it is then permissible to ask."

The carpet salesman says: "Sometimes when I can't seem to interest the customer in anything I show, yet can't find out what the trouble is, I may say: 'Perhaps you would like to see something a little lower in price?' But I never ask her outright."

From the shoe department: "Yes, I think it is possible sometimes; for instance, when the customer, after learning the price of the shoes you show, says that it is more than she wants to pay, then you can ask her what she had thought of paying."

"In the silks, we work in a mention of the price of each kind as we show it, comparing different grades by saying something like: 'This one is more expensive — three dollars a yard — on account of such-and-such features.'"

The picture salesman: "If I know my customer, I feel it safe to ask, because as we have pictures from one to four hundred dollars, we don't want to get her enthusiastic over something she can't afford. Of course, our stock is all



marked on the front, but sometimes customers don't see the mark, so I think it well to call their attention early, in some casual way, to the price of what they are looking at."

The toy saleswoman asks, of the customer coming in for a gift: "Just an inexpensive little toy, or something bigger?" — so as to know how to start the sale.

"If the customer asks me for a silk umbrella, I know she must be willing to pay a pretty good price, because everybody knows how expensive silk umbrellas are nowadays. I begin with the cheapest grade of silk, and go up, until she finds something satisfactory."

Another saleswoman in silks: "No, I never ask, because unless a customer has bought silks recently, she would hardly know what she must expect to pay. Instead, I show her some of various grades, mentioning quality, finish, width, etc., before I say anything about the price, so that it will be justified when I finally do mention it."

The house-furnishings saleswoman: "Yes, I ask the price if I know the customer. If I don't, I show her the whole line and try to get her to say something about the price first."

"Customers buying boys' clothing sometimes ask openly for cheap kinds. Then I feel it is all right to ask them what price they had thought of paying. But usually I get a line on the questions by asking them whether the suit is to be for everyday wear or Sunday."

From men's furnishings: "I ask, if the customer openly calls things too expensive. Or if he does n't seem to like what I am showing him, and I suspect that his objection is based on price, then I suggest a counter where he can find cheaper kinds, but always in a very matter-of-fact tone, as if it was quite all right that he wished to pay a lower price."

And from another salesman here: "I think if you ask price, it limits you in what you can show. If you don't

ask, then you may be able to sell a better grade than the customer would have considered buying."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Have you found customers sensitive about being asked what price they want to pay? What do you consider the chief reasons?
2. What methods do you use to handle the matter?
3. Have you found men to be less sensitive about mentioning price than are women? If so, why do you think this is?
4. What are some of the blunt expressions which should be avoided in asking price?
5. Repeat the seven rules. Do you agree with all of them? If not, with which do you disagree? Why?

## CHAPTER XXV

### MEETING OBJECTIONS

#### SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

ONE of the problems familiar to everybody engaged in retail selling springs from the fact that customers frequently raise certain objections. From the first moment of their approach, when they try to head us off by saying, "I am only looking," to the very end of the sale, when, just as we think it is settled, they object, "But I want my husband to see it first," or, "I have n't enough money with me," — there is no stage in our interview when some objection may not be raised. As the objection is too often allowed to lose the sale, we have to learn how to overcome it in all its most familiar forms. Suggestions along these lines from a number of experienced salespeople form the content of this chapter.

Our method of meeting each objection will vary, depending on whether we decide that it is a *sincere objection*, or only an *excuse* to cover unwillingness to buy; and whether, in addition, we decide that the customer — if sincere — is *right* or *wrong*.

**Is the objection sincere?** The first thing to ask ourselves in any of the cases is, "Does she really mean what she says or is she merely giving an excuse to get away?" As there is no sure way of telling this immediately from her tone, words, or manner, it is usually safer to assume that she means it honestly and to follow the lines laid down in the sections which follow. If we are quite sure from all signs that she really will not buy, then we are advised that the best thing to do is to let her go. This is particularly true if after we try to meet the objection she still persists in it.

**Is she right?** We shall assume that the objection is sin-

cere. The problem then arises, how to meet it. Here, the answer is very simple. If the customer's objection is right, we ought to let the matter rest; but if it is wrong, then we ought to lead her to see wherein the mistake occurs.

Suppose that her refusal to buy is made on the ground that she must look around in other stores first; may there not be circumstances which make it undoubtedly better — from her point of view — that she should do this? To such questions the answer is often, "Yes." We are customers ourselves frequently enough to know that. If we are fair we must recognize that many an objection should be allowed to stand, when the customer has right and reason on her side. It may be the truth that she cannot afford the more expensive article which she objects to buying. If so, she should be allowed to take the cheaper one without undue protest from us. We must not in such cases make an effort to overcome her objections in the sense of persuading her to act against her better judgment. The policy of trying to coax or bulldoze customers into buying in the face of objections they raise is entirely unwise. "Don't let her get away from you, no matter what she says," is a rule that should be broken instead of followed. Following it may capture the immediate sale, but that is not all that the good salesman is after. A better rule is, "Get this sale if you can, but better lose it than risk making your customer dissatisfied afterward." If we force her against her judgment, if we override a perfectly good objection, she will be sorry when she gets home and will be less likely to come back to us. Whereas, if she has good grounds for her objection, and we yield to it, and let her go, we avoid forfeiting her confidence and good will; and this is good salesmanship even if we do not make this sale.

Is she wrong? What we can try to do is to find out whether the customer may not perhaps be mistaken. This is quite possible. *Did* she see the same article somewhere else at a lower price, or did she see something that just



*looked* the same? Can she not decide as well to-day as to-morrow? Is anything to be gained by looking elsewhere? What we have to do is to start questions in her mind which will enable her to make a clear decision upon the point that she has raised. When we do this, it very often happens that she finds that, after all, she is mistaken and the article which is here before her now will be the best thing for her to take.

**“ Tie a string ” to the sale.** If, however, with our best effort, where we do not try to force the sale unduly, we find that the customer still feels that the objection holds, then the best thing to do is to give in gracefully and “ tie a string ” to the sale so that later on she may come back for the article. If she feels that we have been disagreeable or resentful about it, we shall never see her face again; whereas if we pleasantly agree with her that after all perhaps what she wishes *is* the best thing to do and tell her that, if she afterward decides to come back for what we have shown, we shall be glad to help her — then we have laid the best possible foundation for an actual sale later on. Once we have done everything we can — and not too much — to persuade her, then we should make the atmosphere of the sale as pleasant as possible with the hope of having her return for this particular article, or if not for that, then for other purchases.

In the following sections, we assume that the salesperson believes that the customer's objection is sincere, and is handling it in such a way as to find out whether or not it is made on mistaken grounds. We assume also that it does not yet seem strong enough for us to yield to, without first raising some questions in the customer's mind about its correctness. Perhaps, in the end, we may decide it is really right, but before deciding that, it is necessary to examine it in some of the following ways.

SECTION 2. "I CAN GET THE SAME THING  
CHEAPER AT BLANK'S "

WHEN the customer has refused to consider seriously a piece of merchandise that we want to sell her, objecting on the ground that she can get the same thing cheaper in another store, our first aim is to find out whether or not what she saw *is* the same thing, and if it is, whether or not it *did* cost less. If she is right, it would be a mistake to try to make her buy in our store. But we must make sure that she is not mistaken, as customers often are. Or, putting it the other way, we must do our best to show her that she is wrong and persuade her to buy what we are offering.

**Mere denials do little good.** Too many salespeople depend entirely on making general denials, such as, "It can't be so, because you can't buy things any cheaper than they are here. We sell goods lower than anywhere else." They hope to gain their end by positive statements about their store's habit of underselling.

All this is well meant, but very foolish because it does not convince the customer that she is wrong. It is her word against the salesman's, and she is quite certain about whose word she will take. Therefore, we should use flat denials just as little as possible.

Without leading the customer to think that we are challenging her word, we should begin to ask questions about the other article she saw. For since we do not have the two together, neither of us can be sure whether she is right or wrong. So her memory of the other article must be brought out in all the detail which can be recalled, through such questions as the following:

**Is it the same thing?** "I have no doubt you can get something that looks like this for a lower price, but are you certain it *is* the same thing?" "You may be able to find something cheaper, but I do not believe it can be the same hat."

**Mention features which may be different.** "Did you notice the material used in the other one? Are you sure it was the same coat as this? Note how warm and soft this is. Feel its thickness, yet it is not heavy nor clumsy. There are no imperfections of weave and the finish is just what everybody wants this season. The color, too, is quite unusual. Can you be certain that the other was this particular shade of blue? There are so many being sold this season in ordinary shades of blue that possibly the other was one of those."

In the case of a handbag, for instance, what she saw may have been a duplicate design carried out in imitation leather, rather than this genuine pin-seal; its lining was perhaps cotton, not silk; the frame may not have been real shell, or sterling silver. Explain how the superior materials in this bag make it well worth the difference.

This point can be carried further by those who sell coats, suits, and the like, by mentioning the cost per yard of the material here used, estimating the yardage required, and showing how the material alone amounts to a large part of the price marked.

Indeed, in many departments there are goods that can be — and are — copied in cheaper materials, plated silver for sterling, cotton velvet for silk-backed, veneered wood for solid. All these should be borne in mind.

**The workmanship is important.** "Did you happen to look closely at the way it was made? You know the workmanship counts so much in the cost of a thing. If you will examine the way this one is made, I am sure you will understand just why it is priced as it is." Sometimes things made up in the same materials look alike at first glance, but are very different in the satisfaction they give — the better one gives longer use and greater comfort, or it has more lasting beauty. For example, garments made up in some materials wear much longer than others do before beginning to look shabby, because of their workmanship

and finish, as well as their material, and those cost money. Explain that the better kinds, like the one being considered, have been put together by expert workmen, finished by more expensive processes, and so will give greater satisfaction in use, looks, or wear.

**Did the other garment fit so well?** "Did you try on the other dress? Was its fit as perfect as this one? Well, if you did n't try it on, you could hardly tell whether it would suit you, even if lower in price. It might look like this one when you saw it on the rack, but when you came to try it on you could tell better whether or not the cut was as good as this one, for this one certainly brings out the lines of your figure perfectly, and — of course, this is imported. The style is good, and you could not get that unusually smart effect in a cheaper dress."

**Compare with cheaper articles in stock.** We may bring out cheaper articles and put them beside the one we are showing. Then as we speak about differences in each of the points mentioned, we can illustrate with the cheaper article. For instance, comparison may be made in the materials. We may say: "Here is almost the same thing at a lower price, except that the color is a more ordinary shade of blue. The design of this cheaper garment, which looks almost like the one we are talking about, is a duplicate and therefore can be sold more cheaply. This lower-priced one looks almost as well, but it will not wear so long because it is made of shoddy." Or, of some other piece of merchandise, "it looks well, but it is machine-made, not hand-made." The man who sells bedding can effectively demonstrate the contrast between mattresses made of different grades of hair. The furniture salesman can pull out what *at first* looks like the same chair, but in imitation mahogany. The practical advantages of this particular washing-machine as compared with that cheaper one can be readily shown from stock on the floor. Such comparisons with other wares of our own will do much to



change the customer's carelessly formed opinion about the article she saw elsewhere at a lower price.

**Are these goods exclusive?** It may be possible sometimes to prove the customer mistaken because the line we are showing here is exclusive, or samples, and not to be found in any other store in the city. But we must be quite sure about our ground before saying this, because it sometimes happens that stores find that goods sold by them as "exclusive" can be found in other stores at the same price or lower.

**Make the goods help you convince her.** All this implies that we must be very concrete and definite, backing up our statements about an article by proof *within the article*. We point to what we are praising. We make her look and handle. We don't expect her to believe anything just on our say-so. We must not rely on talking loudly or rapidly or emphatically. We must not repeat the same thing over and over again. This just tires and does not convince. We can be quiet and pleasant and make the points we want to make just as convincing, if not more so.

**Give in gracefully.** If, after we have raised these questions in the mind of the customer, she still feels that she can get the goods more cheaply elsewhere, then it is wise to say to her, "Very well, you may be right. Suppose you go and look at the other thing, bearing in mind all these points we have been talking about, and see if it really is the same. If you find that after all you would prefer this one we have been considering, I should be very glad indeed to wait on you. If you are right and I am wrong about this other merchandise, I should like to know about it so that I may tell the buyer, for it is our aim to sell goods as cheaply as they can be bought in the city."

**Illustrations from the salespeople.** "I ask the customer who says that she has seen the same suit elsewhere for a lower figure, whether she noticed the manufacturer's label in the collar, pointing out to her the label in ours and commenting on the superior grade of goods turned out by this

maker. If she cannot recall seeing that same label on the other, then I do not find it hard to convince her that probably it was not exactly the same suit."

"I bring out other articles that we carry, resembling very much what she is looking at, and show her how much the more expensive suggests the cheaper, to prove to her that her eye may have been mistaken. She may have seen a cheaper grade, like our cheaper grades, and then when she sees our finer kinds, she thinks they are the same as what she saw, until I show her several side by side, and suggest how easy it is to confuse them."

"People buying toys often have the vague idea that what they saw in another store is just the same as what I am showing them — and they object if ours costs more. Then I begin to point out details. 'Now, notice this velocipede. Cheaper kinds, looking so much like this that it would be easy to confuse them, have the disadvantage of being made with their spokes solid — so that, if one spoke gets broken, you have to buy a whole new wheel. Whereas in this better kind, if you break one spoke, all you have to do is to buy a single new one for ten cents and stick it in its place.' This is a point that customers would hardly notice, and yet it is one of the many things about a higher-priced velocipede which makes it well worth the difference in price."

"The way I meet the price objection depends entirely on the way it is made. If the customer says, in an indifferent, offhand way, 'Oh, I can get it lower some place else,' then I let her go, because it is evident she is n't going to buy, anyhow. Whereas, if she offers the objection seriously, as if she really wanted to discuss the point, then I take it up just as seriously, trying to find out whether what she saw was actually the same as ours or a less expensive grade. Sometimes I ask her the name of the store where she saw it, and then I go there right away, myself, and find out. But I never get into a dispute about it."

“ When a customer says this about silverware that I am showing her, I ask whether she found out, in the other case, just what grade of silver or plate it was, and whether she chanced to make a sketch of the pattern. I explain how hard it is to carry silverware designs in your head unless you are used to it, and in the matter of plate, I explain the difference between silver on copper and on nickel silver — a difference which she may not have seen or asked about, and yet which may account for the difference in the two prices.”

“ Materials of just the same value, but made by different manufacturers, sell at different prices, and customers often have to pay ten or fifteen cents a yard more for the trade-mark. But they are generally willing to do this if you tell them whose silk it is that you are showing them. They think they are getting better goods, because they are familiar with the advertised make. This often answers the price objection.”

“ Yes, madam, I know the article you mean. We carry it ourselves — a lower-priced line of this same thing that you are looking at, but much less desirable. I can show you one of the cheaper kind, if you wish to see it, and you can prove to yourself that it was the inferior one you saw elsewhere at the lower price.”

### SECTION 3. “THIS IS MORE THAN I WANT TO PAY”

THERE are two ways of handling the customer who hesitates to take an article on the ground that it costs more than she wants to pay. One is to overcome the objection to the price, and the other is to show her something cheaper.

**Paying the higher price.** In overcoming the customer's objections to price, salespeople use such arguments as the following. Explain how this higher-priced merchandise differs from the cheaper. Go over every point of superiority, stressing those which are of most interest to the customer. Sometimes this is found in the lines, the shape or size, the

design, the color, the amount of service to be expected, the material, the fit, or the becomingness. Emphasize the fact that what she is considering can be used or worn longer than a cheaper kind. Tell her that if she buys the more artistic or more exclusive article, she will not tire of it as she would of something commonplace.

We may be able to persuade her that it is specially good value for the money. Or, if it has been reduced from a higher price, use that argument for all there is in it. A woman will often pay thirty-five dollars for a suit when she started with a twenty-five-dollar limit, if she can be persuaded that she is getting fifty-dollar value. "Think how much more you are getting for just the outlay of a few dollars. It is n't often you can get such a bargain. You will find it pays in the end because it gives you more satisfaction and wear, to say nothing of how much better you will look in it!"

Sometimes the argument of good taste appeals. "If your taste inclines you to better things, it is natural for you to have to pay more. You could hardly expect to get such a beautiful tapestry as this at a lower price. Paying a higher price is the penalty for having good taste!" This sort of flattery, which must be based on truth, is often effective in persuading the customer to pay a higher price. So is the "exclusive argument," such as, "Of course you could buy a cheaper fur coat that would probably *do*, but it would n't have the distinction this one has! When you choose an exclusive style you expect to pay more than for a commonplace one — then you have the satisfaction of not seeing a dozen like yours on the street."

**Satisfying her with a cheaper article.** If our conversation with the customer, and our estimate of her formed by our sizing-up, convince us that she will not pay so much, or would be unwise to do so, then she must be shown the lower-priced article. We can do this by saying, "I am sorry that this one is not less expensive, and that I can't



show you anything exactly like it at a lower price, but let us see what we can do." Then we show her something cheaper, selecting a model that resembles the higher-priced article, as nearly as may be, in line, color, material, or trimming. But it would be a mistake to say to the customer that this cheaper article is "just as good" (unless it honestly is). Or, we may be able to point out that in certain respects it is identical, as in color, or fit, while in workmanship or quality it is not equal. In this case we are justified in calling attention to the points of equal value which appeal to the customer.

With a less particular buyer it often happens that the cheaper article *is* just as good for her purpose. She may be more anxious to have style than durability, or she may be much more concerned about color than about quality. All these things have to be taken into account in helping her to select. It cannot be said that any one article is *absolutely* better than another. It is merely better in some points, or for some purposes, and if those points or purposes do not happen to be of importance to the customer, there is no reason in the world why she should pay the higher price. But, on the other hand, it is usually the case with higher-priced goods that on the whole, everything considered, if they are honestly priced, they are better than the cheaper. It is upon this basis that we can urge people to purchase the more expensive merchandise.

If the difference in price is very great, our best plan may be to let the customer take the cheaper, with the idea of preventing her from being sorry after she gets home. We are to bear in mind that we must make her feel really satisfied, so that she will come back again to the store, because this is preferable to having her make this particular purchase, if by so doing she will cherish ill will toward us and toward our store. However, if the difference is only a few dollars or cents, it is probably safe for us to do our best to persuade her to take the higher-priced goods if they are

better for her, since she will soon forget the small extra outlay in the pleasure of getting what she really wants.

**Illustrations from the salespeople.** "If they really can't afford to pay so much, then I show them something similar in cheaper grades. But generally, after making comparisons between the different kinds, they make up their minds to get the better goods, after all. If one piece of silk costs fifty cents a yard more than the other, you can suggest how much better the dress will be after making up, if the finer silk is used, and at an added cost of only two or three dollars. After all, two to five dollars is often to be considered an investment when you realize that the better grade will give you a second or even a third year of wear."

"I don't often have to meet this objection. Why? Because I have sold for a good many years now, and my experience has taught me how to guess pretty accurately what price any customer is going to be willing to pay, and I don't start by showing her merchandise that is too high for her. I believe that the salespeople who have trouble with this objection often bring it on themselves. If you show the right kind of goods, your customer won't make it."

"I show lower-priced goods, until I reach the lowest we have. Then, if she still objects, I tell her politely that this is as low as we carry, though she may be able to get cheaper somewhere else. But I say that we don't like to keep the lower grades because they do not give satisfaction."

"We who sell material by the yard — such as silks and dress material — can often get around the price objection by stressing the generous width of the higher-priced goods, and urging the advantage of taking these because fewer yards are needed and the pattern can be laid on with less waste."

"In justifying the high price of a trunk, when the customer thinks she doesn't want to pay so much, I first emphasize all its good points, and then clinch them by open-

ing up another cheaper trunk near by, and demonstrating the evident differences between them, to prove to her how much more she is getting in the better one, in durability, looks, convenience, space, and special appliances."

"First I try to show that the higher-priced article will really pay in the long run — that is, if it will for the customer's purpose. I always tell the truth about it. Then, if I see that she really can't pay the higher price, and we have nothing cheaper in at the time, I ask her to come in again when we have more, and tell her of any sales that are scheduled for the near future."

#### SECTION 4. "I WANT TO THINK IT OVER"

HERE, too, the salesperson should remember that sometimes it is best for the customer not to decide in a hurry. But if her hesitation is due to an indecisive character rather than to carefulness, then we may use a number of methods to bring her to a decision.

"It may be gone when you return." The salesperson may be able to say: "We have so few of these suits, and selling is so rushed these days, that I am afraid I can't promise that you will find this one when you come in again, even if you come to-morrow." "This is one of our most popular vanity bags this season, and although we have had plenty so far, there are very few left in the size and with the fittings that you want, so you had better take this one while you are sure of getting it. When you come back, this particular style is likely to be gone and we would n't like you to be disappointed." "You know this is the end of the season, and it is n't safe to promise that any hat will be here for any length of time." "It would be too bad if you were to be disappointed when you do make up your mind. I had a lady in here just yesterday about a silk sweater she had liked very much, and it had been sold soon after she left. This is what happens nine times out of ten, for novelties like this go quickly."

**Repeat the strongest selling points.** If we have noted which features of the article appeal most to the customer, we can emphasize them again and again. If the article is a garment or a hat, we can persuade her to try it on once more. If it is exclusive or a sample, we can tell her that it cannot be duplicated, and that if she fails to take it now she will not be able to find another one like it.

**Other suggestions.** To some customers the idea of settling the matter now without hunting further will appeal. "If you go around to other stores you may not find anything you like so well and you will get confused and tired, perhaps ending in taking something that does n't suit you at all. You can avoid all that by deciding now on this one."

Other suggestions are these: "Of course you understand that if there are any points about this you don't like, it can be altered satisfactorily, or if it is the color that makes you hesitate, we could probably order it made for you in a different color." "Would you like to have me hold it for you for an hour or two while you look around the store or go elsewhere and see what you can find? I should be glad to."

Sometimes if the store's policy permits of it, customers are advised to take the article home and return it if not satisfactory, or to make a small deposit. We are told that as a matter of fact the majority of such deposit sales which get goods into the home are final; customers do not bring them back for exchange. But we are told not to over-urge. "Don't keep at them too hard or too long, or you will just tire them out."

If all the arguments suggested above prove useless, we should then yield gracefully and tell them we shall be glad to show the articles again if they are there when they return.



## SECTION 5. "IT IS NOT EXACTLY WHAT I WANT"

**Get an exact description.** This objection may come at two points in the sale. It may come early in the sale before the salesperson has a clear idea of what the customer wants, or it may come later, when both of them know what is desired, but nothing that has yet been shown is exactly what the customer wants.

If the customer has not clearly described what she wants or if we have not asked quite the right questions or shown precisely the right goods, it is then very important that we begin to ask careful questions. We may ask her about what style she particularly desires, what color she prefers, the exact kind of material, the trimming that will be satisfactory, the size or shape or make of article that she has in mind. We might find out whether her idea came from something she saw in another house, or worn by another woman, or from a picture in a magazine or catalogue.

It is particularly useful to ask her how what she wants differs from the goods being shown. By this means she can point out that instead of this she wants that, and point by point we can build up a rather clear idea of what she desires.

**If we have exactly or nearly what she wants.** Two situations arise which are handled in different ways. One is that in which we have nearly what she wants, and the other is that in which we do not have anything close to it. We shall discuss the first situation in the following.

When we have drawn from her a fairly clear idea of what she wants, we shall, of course, try to find it for her if we have it in stock. If, however, we have not the exact thing we shall get something as nearly like it as possible, according to her description. We talk this up in the right way before she has had time to find fault with it, emphasizing all the features in which it resembles her description. Perhaps we may say, "It is n't exactly what you had in mind,

but is certainly the most satisfactory and beautiful (or becoming and stylish) thing you could buy."

If she still keeps saying that it is n't what she wants, we should try to find out what particular point fails to please her, and suggest any alterations that may be practicable. For instance, a different shade may be sold with the lamp being shown, or on a bureau we can substitute glass knobs for the wooden ones. With a dress or suit, a slight change in skirt length or sleeve length, in collar, sash, or vest, will be enough to make the garment what she wants.

If the fault found is not a matter of style, but has to do with price, this too will come out with tactful questioning and will be handled in the manner described in section 3.

**If we do not have what she wants.** If, however, everything we show her has something wrong with it, that cannot be remedied by alteration, then we must face the fact that we cannot meet her ideas. If, in our judgment, nothing we can show her is so suitable for her as the thing she has in mind, we should not urge her further unless we are convinced she could not find what she wants anywhere else.

If nothing we have is near to what she wants, we should then try to show her *many* different kinds of merchandise. We should not stop with two or three varieties, but should get out a great many articles on the chance that among these she will see something she likes so well that she will forget what she specified on coming in.

In this case we should be frank enough to admit that these are not exactly what she has asked for, but we promise her that it will be worth her while to look them over. We assure her at the same time that it may prove impossible for her to get just what she has in mind anywhere. "Customers often tell us how hard it is to find exactly what they are looking for, particularly in ready-to-wear things such as hats, furs, coats, etc. And just as often as not, while handling the goods, they see something else that they like just as well. and in fact, sometimes more becom-

ing than the other might have been. If they see a garment in a fashion magazine or on another woman, it is almost impossible for them to tell whether it would do for their type, whereas those they have tried on they know about."

**If they do not buy.** In case the objection cannot be satisfactorily met in either of these two ways, and it is evident that the customer does not want to buy the article, then, as in all other cases, we should pleasantly agree with her that the best thing to do is to see if she can find exactly what she wants somewhere else, and that if she cannot we shall be glad to help her again, provided what we are showing her is still in stock by that time.

**Illustrations.** Following are some methods used by experienced salespeople in meeting this situation:

"I explain clearly why and how this particular garment is better for her purpose than what she wanted would be. I call her attention to the material, cut, lining, finish, color, fit, etc., laying stress on any point which she seemed most interested in when she described her own idea."

"Sometimes the reason she hesitates over what you show her is because it is extreme in style, the latest thing, and her idea has been something in the fashion of the previous season. You have to tell her that though these strike her as odd, and quite different from what she has had in mind, it is only because they are new and unusual and that if she were to wear one for a few days she would soon get used to it, and grow to like it even better than she would have liked the out-of-style thing she asked for."

"I think that with a lot of customers you have to overcome their previous ideas and persuade them that what they are looking at is more desirable for them to buy just because it is different from the sort of thing they have been wearing. So many want only what they always have had, and are a little afraid to try a novelty."

"Try to find out whether it is the color or the weight of the dress goods that she objects to. If color, show lighter

and darker shades; if weight, show heavier and lighter. If this does n't overcome the trouble, ask once more what purpose she is going to use it for. If she restates her purpose, she may use different language from before and so give you a fresh hint which will send you after something that is entirely different from what has been shown — and often she will say, 'That's it.'"

"Unless the customer is trying to match something, this is not really an objection. If what you show her appeals to her, it does n't make any difference what 'she had in mind.' Often you will sell her something far more suitable than what she thought she wanted. With such a large stock to choose from, people change their minds very quickly if you use your wits and bring out what they ought to have — they know it when they see it."

"Never stop when they say that, for often if you keep showing the advantages of what is before them, you can sell them something they had not thought of before, and send them off better satisfied than if you had had exactly what they asked for. Sometimes they come in with a wrong idea — what they think will do won't do at all, and it is up to you to use your knowledge of the goods to show them why."

#### SECTION 6. "I WANT MY HUSBAND TO SEE IT"

IN buying certain kinds of merchandise women very often want their husbands' approval before deciding. This is quite natural in the case of furniture and other household goods. It is also encountered in ready-to-wear for themselves and their children.

**Get the husband to come in now.** When the customer says, "I like it, but think my husband ought to see it before I decide," you should try to get him in at once to approve the purchase. We may ask such questions as, "Would you care to telephone him right away?" "Is his place of business downtown so that he could step in?"



“Shall we telephone his office or would you like to ask him to come over?” This plan should be urged on the ground that if she puts off the decision the article may be sold before she returns.

**Hold it until the husband can come.** If he cannot come right away, we may suggest telephoning him to come in at his lunch-hour, with the understanding that the article will be held until he sees it. If all of these are out of the question, the best plan is to lay the goods aside for the time until he comes in.

**Send the goods home for inspection.** If the customer has an account, or pays a desposit, or agrees to a C.O.D. sale, the article may be sent to her home so that the husband may see it there. This can also be done if she will consent to open an account at once. We may explain that this will not oblige her to keep the article, but that she may return it for credit or exchange if they decide against the purchase. We should urge such a decision on the ground that it is better to have the article sent on approval than to let the chance go and find it sold to some one else when she returns for it.

In the case of goods sent on approval, the policy of the house has to be consulted, because some stores are very free about permitting this, while others discourage it.

**Deciding without the husband.** If none of these plans work, it may be possible to overcome her wish to have her husband see the goods before she decides. Just how this shall be approached must be determined after careful study of the customer. If she is the kind that can be “jollied” a little, then one line of talk will serve. Whereas if she is shy, or stiff, or on her dignity, or if it seems that her husband certainly must be consulted, then it will not do to use any arguments which might be considered presumptuous.

We might say: “It has been our experience that in the majority of cases, what the wife likes, the husband likes. So rather than miss the chance of getting this when you

want it so much yourself, would n't it be safe to assume that your husband will think the same way you do about it?" Sometimes it is possible to "jolly" her as follows: "Surely you won't risk losing the prettiest suit you ever tried on just for the sake of what a man may think about it!" "You know how a man is about a woman's clothes and hats. One kind looks just like another to him, and he won't even know you have a new one on." "If you like it, that should be enough. Just tell your husband he *has* to like it!" "Well, he liked what you bought before you were married, didn't he? then he ought to be just as well suited with your choice now!"

One saleswoman says: "In my experience, I find that usually when the man comes in, he says, 'Oh, take whatever you want. I've got to get back to work. How much do you need?' Most men get so fussed in a woman's department that they will do anything to get out, so the woman gets what she wants anyhow."

#### SECTION 7. "BUT I WANTED SOMETHING BETTER"

It would seem hardly necessary to gather ideas as to how to meet an objection like this. As one saleswoman says, "This is the easiest selling situation we have to meet; anybody would know what to do." So it would seem, yet there are undoubtedly some salespeople so lacking in enterprise that they allow an objection of this kind to put a stop to the sale. That is, they either stand inactive and let the customer move on elsewhere, or they keep on showing merchandise of the same grade and price, without even making an effort to convince the customer that this will do just as well as the more expensive kinds.

There are few stores whose stock is not large enough to provide plenty of high-priced merchandise in practically any of its lines, including a few very expensive items. We, of course, begin to show goods at medium prices, and if objections based on price are raised, they are usually,

"Haven't you anything lower?" rather than "Haven't you anything higher?" But occasionally some one comes in who does n't like what is shown her because it isn't fine enough for her, and so she objects — "I want something better."

**Show her the finest goods in stock.** If there are still more expensive kinds, this is the time to show them, and as we show them we should find out "how high she really expects to go, but without letting her know that we are finding out."

Others say, "I tell her we can go as high as she wants." "Certainly it is no trouble to sell when price is not the most important consideration, because we can concentrate our selling talk on other points of the goods." "I show her very expensive garments to prove to her that we carry merchandise as fine as she can ask for." "I take her right to the French Room and there are usually models there that will satisfy the most luxurious taste." "If what I am showing her is exclusive, I emphasize that point, because often it will sell a thing even if the price is n't so high as she expected to pay."

**If we have nothing expensive enough.** If we have already shown her the finest things in stock and she is still not satisfied, then we face a problem. "When this happens," says one saleswoman, "I try to sell her what we have by trying to show her how good it is, how perfectly it will answer her purpose, and how desirable it is for this season. I carry it away from the other merchandise, holding it in a good light, draping it effectively, and perhaps getting her to try it on." Another successful saleswoman says: "If what we have is not fine enough to satisfy her, I suggest that we can make something up to suit her ideas or perhaps order it especially for her. Then, if nothing will work, I give her my card, telling her we are getting in new goods every day, and if she will come in a day or two I will have some better models ready for her."

Or, if she is willing, I take her name and telephone number and promise to call her up when something comes in."

"I explain that the reason why these goods seem low-priced to her is that everything has gone down this year and that the fine goods she paid a great deal for a few years ago won't cost her so much now. What she has been looking at may be the same grade of goods she bought last year at a much higher price." One very sensible saleswoman says: "When they still object and say they want something finer, I point out that the important thing is not what they pay for it, but how it looks on them. I tell them that in style and appearance the suit they have on, which does n't cost quite so much, is more pleasing than some would be which might cost a great deal more." Sometimes the explanation can be made that these goods were bought under special circumstances and would usually be sold at a higher price, or that the house prefers to make a smaller profit on this line of goods than do most houses, and that, after all, it is quality and appearance and value which count.

#### SECTION 8. "I HAVE N'T ENOUGH MONEY WITH ME"

FOR the charge customer this is not a serious objection, because the saleswoman can ask her about her charge account. If she has no account, there are three ways of meeting the objection. One is to propose that she *pay part down* and have the article delivered C.O.D. In that case we should ask when she expects to be at home to receive it. Or, it is in many stores considered advisable to recommend that she *open a charge account* at once so that the goods may be charged and sent. If she does not wish to open an account and has not enough money with her to have it sent C.O.D., then in many cases it is possible to effect a sale by having her *make a small deposit* of what money she has with her so that the article may be laid away until she can pay the balance.



In case alterations are needed, we may tell her that if these are started after the deposit has been paid, we will lay the garment away for three days after the alterations are completed so that she can call for it at any time she has the money. If our store has the "lease" system, we can also explain that to her, telling her that she can get certain kinds of merchandise on part payments.

Salespeople should not forget that, although all these methods of easy payment are well known to the employees of the store, they are perhaps not known to the large proportion of the customers. We should not take for granted that the customer already knows about such plans. Therefore, we must be ready to suggest them, as the idea may be all that is needed to make the customer decide at once.

If, however, she will not buy, the time has come to give in courteously and to establish that pleasant atmosphere which will induce her to return. We must not show any resentment at her failure to buy, but ask her to come again and offer to show her anything she wants to see another time.

#### SECTION 9. "I WILL WAIT UNTIL IT IS MARKED DOWN"

THE answer to this objection depends somewhat on the time of year at which it is made. If it is the middle or the end of a season, we cannot tell the customer that the article is already reduced as much as it is going to be, because very possibly it will be reduced more. If it is the opening of the season, or if merchandise is not seasonal, a number of different arguments are used.

**It may be gone.** We can tell the customer that if she waits for several months until reduction time this particular article may be gone. If it is a hat, we can remind her there is only this one in this style, or that there are only a few like it. In the case of a suit or dress, the size, color, or style she wants may not be in stock when the line is re-

duced. The same applies to other merchandise besides ready-to-wear.

"Our stock is large now," we may say, "with plenty of styles to choose from, and a full size-line, but we cannot promise this at the end of the season. By that time the one you want may be sold." Or, we may add, "This happens to be the only one of this kind that we have. If it goes, no more like it will come in." In some cases we may say that it is marked very close to cost now, and that we are not sure it can be reduced enough to make it worth her while to wait. Also we can point out that it is the less desirable merchandise that stays on until mark-down time, and if the customer wants the best styles and fashionable materials, she has to buy early in the season.

**Show other cheaper merchandise.** We may tell the customer that if she needs something right away, but does not care to pay so high a price, we can show her other merchandise that costs less. But in doing so we should constantly emphasize the difference. "You will realize that the one you have been looking at is an exclusive style and quality and you cannot expect to get the same thing for a lower price. That one is worth every cent of its price. These cheaper kinds may answer your purpose, but you will never be entirely satisfied with them."

**You want the use of it now.** Perhaps the most powerful argument in persuading her to take the merchandise now is the fact that it can be used at once. "I ask her whether she is going to allow the difference of a few dollars to stand in the way of her wearing a beautiful hat all through the season." Or, "If you wait until the end of the winter to buy your little boy's heavy coat, what good will it do him then? He has to have something to wear in the meantime." To the same effect is this statement: "I explain to her that she will get all the worth of the difference in price and even more than that in wearing the suit from the beginning to the end of the season. I talk about the necessity of

having a suit in a fashionable style at the right time. 'Why lose the satisfaction of looking your best for the next four or five months just for the sake of saving a very small part of the purchase price?'"

**If it is wise to wait.** Sometimes it happens that there is a possibility of a reduction soon in the lines she is looking at. "If so, I tell her I will call her up as soon as this occurs, if she will give me her number. But if it is the sort of goods that hardly ever gets marked down, or that never gets marked down, as in the case of certain nationally advertised articles. I tell her that very frankly."

#### SECTION 10. "I AM LOOKING FOR A FRIEND"

**Is the friend coming in?** We begin by finding out whether the customer expects the friend to come in soon and look over the merchandise, or whether she is looking alone, expecting to return to the friend and tell her what she has seen. If the first, then we shall proceed to learn whether she wishes to look at once through our stock, so as to be ready to show the friend the goods on her arrival; or whether she wishes to put the whole thing off until the friend comes. If so, all we can do is to offer her a chair and assure her of our readiness to give her attention as soon as the friend comes.

**Find out what is wanted.** If, however, she wishes to begin looking at the merchandise either because the friend is coming soon, or because the friend is not coming in at all, we may let her go around by herself if she says she prefers to, or else begin showing goods to her. We should try to get at once a clear idea of what the friend needs, including all the information we can get as to size, color, material, and price. Then we get out merchandise that we think may be suitable, keeping it out until the friend arrives (if she is coming in) and continuing the discussion pleasantly with the customer. Since she may have some influence with the friend who is to do the buying when the time comes, she must be handled with the same skill and

care as though she were doing the buying for herself. Pleasing the woman we are seeing now is quite as important as pleasing the actual purchaser when she comes.

In this case we should be generous in showing the proper goods and attentive in listening to her comments. We should be quick to act on any hints she may give as to the friend's probable preferences. Sometimes it is practicable to suggest to the shopper that she herself try on something that is being looked at. This helps to hold her attention, and sometimes even results in her buying the article for herself, so that we kill two birds with one stone.

If she finds one or two things she thinks promising, then, if the friend is still being waited for, she may be safely left for a moment or two while we attend to another customer. If, however, the friend is not expected at once, but is to come in later, in a few moments, then the thing should be laid aside.

**Try to settle it now.** If the friend is absent and will not come in, it may be possible to settle the sale at once by suggesting a charge, a C.O.D., or a deposit, with the idea of a subsequent exchange in case the friend is not satisfied with the purchase. All these methods of payment must be suggested quickly, so as to get ahead of the customer's objection, "Of course, I can't actually buy for her." Our suggestions will prove that she *can* do this, and thereby save her friend a trip downtown.

## SECTION II. "I WANT TO LOOK AROUND OTHER STORES BEFORE BUYING"

THE customer's feeling that she wants to look in several stores before deciding is met in two different ways by salespeople. Some say that it is best to agree cheerfully, while others believe in trying to argue her out of it. It is quite clear, of course, that before trying to keep her from shopping around first, we must be confident that it is the best thing for her not to do so.



**Show plenty of goods.** Whichever method we adopt we must undoubtedly do everything we can to make the sale first. That is, we should show everything in stock that could possibly meet her requirements. We must certainly not let her go off after seeing only one or two pieces of merchandise, as if that were all we could be expected to do. We must let her see for herself that the stock is large, with plenty of things to choose from. Our selling talk must make this clear. We should make her feel, in every way we can, that to get the best assortment at the lowest prices she will not need to go anywhere else.

**Agree with her pleasantly.** But if in spite of all our efforts she still wants to look somewhere else, it may be well to let her go. We should not act as if we were disappointed, or as if she did not have the right to look around. On the contrary, we should be pleasantly courteous, so that she may possibly come back for some of the things we have shown her. Some salespeople say: "Of course, I am not sure you can do any better any place else than you can here, but perhaps it is just as well for you to try. At any rate, here is my card in case you want to come back. I should be very glad to see you again and I hope you will come in." Others say: "Since you seem so well pleased with this dress, I shall be glad to hold it for you for an hour or so, while you look elsewhere. I feel quite confident in doing this because I know you won't find anything else you will like so well. I know you will come back for it. But try to do it as soon as you can, for these dresses are in demand and I don't like to hold it very long." Quite frankly and courteously another salesperson tells the customer: "Indeed we are glad to have you look through other stores, because we know that this is the best way for you to convince yourself that we have the finest line in town. I don't believe you will find another suit so perfect-fitting and of such splendid value as this one."

**Don't argue with her.** It does not pay to assert that

we have everything that the other stores have, that our prices are lower, and that the customer will be wasting her time looking around. It does not pay because it is not always true; moreover, getting into an argument like this often results in letting a certain amount of crossness enter into our tones and manner. It is a mistake to tell a customer that she is wasting her time and energy, and it is untruthful as well as unwise to say to her that prices and materials are the same all over town and that she can't do any better any place else. What we really want to impress on her is the fact that prices and materials are *not* the same all over town; for, if that *were* the case, we could not hope to convince any one that *our* prices are *lower*. Nor is it wise to say that our merchandise is as good as that in other stores; if we cannot say it is better, we should not raise the point at all. One long-headed salesman says: "The truth is, you can't do much with the customer who insists on shopping around. She has a perfect right to do so. The best thing to do is to show her all you have, talk it up, and, if she insists, let her go with a very pleasant invitation to return." Quite knowingly, another salesman remarks: "I like to shop around myself before I buy, and that is certainly the customer's privilege. But I always tell her I am sure she can't find better values anywhere. It is surprising how many come back." Finally, one reports: "I always make the customer feel that I am glad to have her look elsewhere, but I try to get her interested before she goes, so that she will return. Above all, she must be made to feel that she can get away without being obliged to buy, and that she won't find us disagreeable if she decides not to. But be sure she gets all the good points of the merchandise before she goes."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why ought we to assume that objections are sincere?
2. How can we tell when they are not sincere?

3. If they are not sincere, what should we do?
4. If they are sincere, what should we seek to do?
5. What is meant by "tying a string" to the sale?
6. When the customers say that they "can get it cheaper" at another store, what should your plan of attack be?
7. Why should you not say that you are sure that she cannot get it more cheaply somewhere else?
8. If the price is more than a customer wants to pay, what should you do?
9. If the article is not exactly what the customer wants, what should you do?
10. If the customer says she will wait until it is marked down, what should you say?
11. Which of the salespeople's remarks in section 2 are the best in your opinion?
12. Which are the best in section 3? Section 5?

## CHAPTER XXVI

### CLOSING THE SALE

#### SECTION I. WHEN TO BEGIN TO CLOSE THE SALE

**Introduction.** We have been discussing ways of showing goods and of presenting talking points to the customer. It is now necessary to discuss methods of getting the customer to make a selection.

There are three possible cases: (1) The customer may, by the time the merchandise has been shown, have made a selection. She will then indicate this by saying, "I will take this, I think," or an equivalent remark. (2) Or, after she has seen all the goods, she may have made up her mind very positively that she will not take anything. These two cases are very similar, because the salesperson has nothing more to do except, in the first case, to carry out the final details of the sale, and, in the second case, to thank the customer courteously for the opportunity to show the goods and thus help her to make a graceful exit. (3) The third case is much more difficult. The customer remains undecided about which of several articles to take. This calls for the highest art of salesmanship and is the one to which we shall pay attention in this chapter.

**How to tell when to begin to close.** In every sale there comes a moment when the customer begins to make her selection. She may be the independent kind who can do this alone, or she may be the kind who relies upon the salesperson to help her. But in either case, we have to watch carefully for that moment and begin instantly to help. The signs by which we may know that this point is reached vary. They are those we have already taken up in connection with "Getting the Customer Interested in the Merchandise" (chapter XX). The *comments* and *ques-*



tions of the customer may show that she is particularly interested in one or two articles. The *expression* of her eyes may show that she is interested. She may *look* at the same article several times, or she may *ask* to have one or more tried on. By signs such as these it soon becomes apparent that a sufficient selection has been shown.

These signs can be made clear by using the reports of our salespeople. "If she shows more and more satisfaction with the hat every time she looks in the mirror, I think the time has come to center my efforts upon selling that hat." Another salesperson does not wait until she has concentrated upon one article. "I begin before that, when she seems to be inclined toward three or four, for what I mean by closing the sale is the effort to get her to select one out of several." "When she has laid several aside, as if she meant to look at them again, then I stop showing and start to get her to decide between those." One saleswoman rather relies upon her own opinion. "As soon as I see that one or two of the things under consideration are right for her to have, I think it is time to begin to close the sale." A salesman in the clothing department says, "When a man has got down to the point where he sees something he really likes, or if I have before him at least three suits that fit him well and are the right color, price, weight, etc., then I begin to close down on him."

In brief, the time to begin to close the sale is when a salesperson sees that the customer has before her enough of the goods she likes to enable her to make a selection that will satisfy her.

## SECTION 2. FOCUSING THE CUSTOMER'S ATTENTION

THE work of getting the customer to make one selection may be described as that of getting her to focus her attention upon some one or two pieces. We have just described *when* to begin to close the sale, and we shall now proceed to describe *how* to do it. Let us outline certain rules about

focusing attention upon one or two pieces and helping the customer to arrive at a definite decision between these.

**Stop showing goods.** The moment having arrived when we think it is wise to begin to close the sale, we should stop bringing out goods. The customer has given evidence of liking some articles well enough to make a decision amongst them. Showing others now will only confuse her. "I don't bring any more out and I begin to put away those that she does n't appear to like." "It often helps her to decide if you eliminate the ones she does n't like."

**The wisdom of laying aside.** In order to keep the desired few in direct view of the customer, the salesperson should note some convenient spot near by, on a counter, a table, or a garment rack, where some of the articles which have been looked at and passed over can be laid or hung, within reach if wanted, but not before the customer's very eyes. This is not the kind of "putting away" sometimes objected to on the ground that it looks to the customer as if we were trying to hurry her to a decision. It simply avoids confusing her by placing to one side the things she is probably not interested in.

**How to select the few.** When a customer's choice lies among the four or five directly before her, then the task is to make her center her attention on just one or two things out of those at which she is looking. This can be done if we listen to her comments, watch her eyes and expression for what she likes. Thus, we can gradually put aside all except one or two. This leads her to note all the desirable points that first attracted her to these, and leads her to compare and weigh the arguments. When this point is reached, she is beginning to make a final decision with regard to one of them.

One saleswoman finds it well always, when this step has been reached, or sometimes even earlier in the sale, to go away for a moment on some excuse connected with the sale, so as to leave her customer alone to think it out

without being talked to or watched. This seems wise considering how many there are of us who find it easier to make a decision if we are left alone.

**Focusing the attention with goods.** These devices have to do merely with the handling of merchandise, and show the effects of moving things around by placing them before the eyes of the customer and taking them away. While they help considerably, other devices are needed before these can be of full use. The others have to do particularly with the selling talk, which is valuable in effecting a decision, and will be taken up presently. We have assumed now that there are only two articles before the customer, and that it becomes necessary for her to make a final selection between these.

**Confidence.** It is at this point that all that has been said about the sizing-up of customers, the showing of courtesy, and the giving of information about merchandise is of the greatest importance in the sale. Here the whole art of the salesman is focused. The customer is undecided. She likes some things about one article and other things about the other, and it is difficult to get the scales to tip one way or another. The considerations that make them tip are often trivial, and usually have to do with the real merits of the goods. Yet in deciding upon these matters she has frequently to take the word of the salesperson.

The confidence of the customer in the opinion of the salesperson is of very great importance. This has been built up during the sale by the fact that we have proved willing to show goods, that we have answered questions intelligently, and that we have gotten our stock out quickly and with discrimination. When this confidence has been established, then very frequently our statement that we think this would be better, or the force with which we emphasize some one feature in one of the articles, may lead to a decision. Confidence in the salesperson's ability is of vital importance at this point.

**When to offer advice.** If the customer appeals to us for advice, we should give it. And it will be more successful if our tastes happen to be the same as hers. "If I were choosing for myself, I should not hesitate a minute about taking this one. I would n't want you to take it unless you are perfectly satisfied, but it certainly does look well on you."

If our advice is not asked for, then we have to be very careful about offering it, and we must be particularly careful about the statement, "That is the kind I wear myself." If our tastes differ from those of the customer, or if the customer does not have complete confidence in us, this may spoil the sale. Such an occurrence happened when a well-dressed man was unable to decide as between two lines of pajamas. The salesman (who was not at all well-dressed) thought he would clinch the matter by making the remark referred to, and the sale was lost because the customer felt that if a person with as obviously bad taste as the salesman seemed to have would wear an article, he himself did not want to.

**Selling points.** Whether the customer has full confidence in the salesperson or not, the selection is helped by reviewing the selling points of the two articles under consideration. We are told to select as selling points (1) features that the customer seems to be interested in, and (2) certain special values which the article possesses.

**Play a favorite.** When we learn which two or three articles the customer likes best, then we decide in our minds, by watching her closely, which one of these she probably inclines to most strongly, or what she ought to want — and we begin on that. If it is a dress, we talk of its attractive color, its effective lines, and its smart trimmings. If it happens to be a hat, we urge on her that it is undoubtedly more becoming than the others, we speak of its wearing qualities, we put it alongside of another one of inferior quality and call attention to the fineness of its



material and workmanship. Then we can gradually lay over to one side the others we want her to forget about, and concentrate on this one. It was all right at an earlier point in the sale to hold ourselves willing to admire a number of garments impartially, but the time has now come to point out the values of only one.

**Answering objections.** At this point the customer may raise a number of objections, either sincere, or just excuses for not buying. These need to be handled according to methods described in detail in chapter XXV.

**Demonstrating and trying on.** Certain merchandise will not sell itself from boxes or the counter. Several pieces of lace may look equally attractive, so that the customer cannot tell which she wants, but let the salesperson place it — if a collar — around the customer's neck to show how gracefully it follows the line of her dress; or, for example, let her slip on the big, enveloping wrap, so that the customer can see how she herself will look in it — and the decision is made instantly. Perhaps these same things have been tried on before. But since that first trying-on she may have made unfavorable comments about almost all the others, so that it is advisable to return to the earlier ones and play them up in this way.

Indeed, repeating the trying-on is one of the best ways to get the customer to make her decision. Induce her to put on once more the garment you think she ought to have. A final trip to the mirror for a full-length view, an appeal to another salesperson to raise the shade and get more light, a suggestion that if the collar is not liked *this way* it can be easily altered *that way*, showing her with just the right, deft touches — any of these may make her decide.

It pays sometimes to be generous with suggestions about simple alterations when the garment is on. For some women are fussy and never like the way a thing *is* so well as they think they are going to like the way it *might be*.

They love to have things altered a little to suit their own fancy. Sometimes, if we call in the fitter for suggestions, it helps the sale, and we can often get the name and address while waiting for the fitter. "If you get them started to the alteration room, the sale is made."

Length of silk, cotton, or wool material should be draped once more in the folds or pleats which best bring out their merits, in order to show the customer which particular piece will suit her best when made up. All those who sell yard goods understand the value of this draping method, but not all of them realize how useful it can be in focusing the customer's attention on one or two pieces in preference to the rest.

This same method can be used with all kinds of merchandise. We can operate anything from a camera to a washing-machine or a davenport bed, in order to illustrate effectively all the good things we are saying about it. In closing the sale it is very important that all these demonstrations should be performed over and over again. We must not rest content if we have demonstrated the washing-machine once, or if we have put on the wrap some time ago. We must now do it over again, so that the customer will not forget, and often this final demonstration closes the sale immediately.

**The opinion of others.** Sometimes the decision is brought about by an appeal to the opinions of others. When two or more women are shopping together, the salesperson may force the decision by consulting the opinion of the customer's companion. The buyer may be brought in. Another salesperson may be appealed to.

In the case of a garment, a hat, or other such apparel, it is sometimes helpful to say that "everybody is wearing it." But this must, of course, be done with caution. Many women do not want to buy what everybody is wearing; what they want is something that nobody else in town is likely to have. But on the other hand, very often the

garment will be taken at once if the customer is informed that it is going to be fashionable this season.

### SECTION 3. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE SALESPeOPLE

"I FIND that I can help in the eliminating process in the case of choosing a gift, if I ask the customer what else her relative or friend has in the same line. Then, when she answers, I lay aside all the things we have been looking at that are like what the friend already has, and concentrate on the articles that the customer may choose without risk of duplication."

"Sometimes you can help the customer to center on one or two things by calling in the opinion of some one else. Offer your own, if she asks it, or consult the person who is shopping with her, or the buyer if he is standing near. The weight of just one additional opinion will sometimes decide the matter."

"If she seems to be showing a preference for goods around a certain figure, I disregard the others at higher or lower prices than that, and concentrate on any I can find for her at that figure."

"I never hurry an undecided customer. I just feel that I must have patience and give lots of time. I suggest that she try on the dress that I think most suitable for her, and say, 'That is extremely good on you,' or, 'Don't you like that better than almost any of the others?' Or, if she asks my opinion, I say, 'Both of these look nice on you, but I think that this one is really a little better on account of the line of the neck, or the long-waisted effect,' etc."

"If I can tell at all which dress my customer inclines to, I talk up that one as much as I can. 'Notice the novel collar, or the fashionable shade, or the lines which give you a slender look.' I do this to try to impress her with my knowledge and taste, for I want her to have confidence in my judgment and take my advice."

"Sometimes I ask, 'Would you like my candid opinion?' And then I tell her which I think is most becoming and will give her best satisfaction."

"If she asks me what I honestly think, I tell her. Usually I don't have any trouble getting a customer to make up her mind if I myself can see what fits her best and is most becoming and most suitable for what she wants it for. Don't be afraid to give your opinion, but be careful always to let the customer think she is buying the one *she* picked out."

"I never force anybody to buy if she does n't want to. I'm quite sure it does n't pay. I always show them everything, and if we don't seem to have what they want, I tell them to come back in a week or so, that we are always getting new petticoats in stock, and that our selection is as fresh and complete as any in the city."

"Sometimes, I try to get at her reason for being undecided: is it the color of the petticoat, or its price, or its material? Then I advise her according to what she says. I tell her that a jersey wears best, and that the color she is considering will be good because she can wear it with so many different dresses, etc."

"I find that usually, if I have shown plenty of stock, and been interested in finding what she wants and in talking up the good points on the petticoats, even if she does n't decide then, she will come back."

"Let the customer take her time. Don't make her feel that you want her to hurry up. And be sure she is really satisfied before you close the sale. If it is a toss-up between two or three skirts, I recommend the one with the lines that suit her figure best. If it is a choice between the fit of one and the pattern of another, I talk up the better-fitting one every time. Fit is more important than pattern, and besides, any customer likes to have you imply that she has a good figure, and I always do it as emphatically as I can and still be sincere."



"I generally wait until I see which one she is leaning to, and then I do everything I can to get her to want that one. I tell her it is an ideal skirt for traveling (or for sports, or for dress) and tell her why. I mention its good points, and contrast it with others we have looked at."

"Convince your customer that you are reliable and know what you are talking about. Don't let her think you are just trying to make a sale. Interest yourself in her problem, take it seriously, as if the skirt were for yourself. If you know your merchandise, you can talk about it convincingly, about the wool in it, about its wearing qualities. Then you won't have to force the sale. She will be satisfied before she has handed the money over."

"I try always to sell the skirt that her friend will compliment her on — that's the way you build up trade for the store."

"If you can ascertain which one she inclines to, concentrate on that, praising its good points, and comparing it with the others so as to bring out its superiority for her purpose."

A woman who sells dresses and suits says: "I try to make her see which one looks best on her, which is the best value, which fits best or will wear longest. I tell her my own opinion of it. I have her try it on once more. If she has any objections, I answer them the best I can."

"Get her interest centered on two or three, at first, and then gradually on the one that you think she really ought to have. Call the fitter and ask for suggestions as to alterations that will make the dress even more attractive. Or pin up the skirt yourself, so as to show her how it will look when it is made the correct length for her."

A good idea comes from the waist saleswoman: "When you are trying to settle between two waists for an undecided customer, don't always argue for the more expensive. Determine which will answer her purpose best, whatever it costs. If it is the cheaper one, and you urge her to decide

on that, you win her confidence in your disinterested helpfulness, and you may succeed in selling her that one, whereas an effort to sell her the more expensive might result in not selling her any at all. Remember that the important thing is to satisfy the customer."

"When the choice narrows down to two, you have to work diplomatically. You may like one better, and the customer prefer the other. Then you may find it wiser to go over to her side, for though in your own mind you may disagree with her, still it really does n't make any difference which one she buys, if both are really all right, fitting her and looking well on her."

"Often when it is up to him to decide between two suits, the question does n't lie with the price but with the color. He may admire the light one, yet feel that he ought to buy the dark. So I say something like this: 'Well, the dark one is more practical, of course, and will do the year 'round for almost every occasion, but if you are intending to buy another suit a little later, then you might take the light one now. For it certainly looks well on you.'"

"When I get the choice down to perhaps three suits, I try to decide for myself which one would be most satisfactory to the customer. If he seems to like all three equally well, but I know that two of them would probably not give him real satisfaction, I try to swing him over to the best one."

"I make suggestions that will help the customer to decide. I call his attention to the best features of the two suits. One might be more durable and serviceable, whereas the other, though not so promising as regards wearing well and cleaning often, has far newer style features. I explain how one is different from the other, but I do my best to sell him the one that fits him better."

In other merchandise besides wearing apparel, the same methods of recommendation and comparison will work. Take picture frames. "Say you have shown her half a

dozen frames, all the sort that will do well for her picture. She has n't decided between them. Go over them all, asking questions and making comparisons. You can tell by her interest and your own judgment which are best, and gradually work down to two or three. Let her take her time to consider these. Then get her to concentrate on the one you think best, and start to close the sale."

The furniture salesman urges the customer to take the piece that she really likes best, even though it does cost a little more than the others. "A year from now, you will be thinking of the furniture, not of the price. If you'd so much rather have this one, why not decide on it? You have to live with it a good many years, and you had better take the one that will satisfy you best in the long run."

#### SECTION 4. WHERE SALESPeOPLE "FALL DOWN" IN CLOSING THE SALE

**By their manner.** Sales that might have been successful are sometimes lost because the salesperson has too little real interest to induce the customer to make up her mind about the purchase. The customer may be quite willing to buy, though undecided about *what* to buy. If at this point the impression is thrust upon her that the salesperson does not particularly care whether she comes to a decision or not, she can hardly be blamed for going somewhere else for her purchase.

Lack of interest on the salesperson's part is shown in carelessness, inattention to the customer's likes and dislikes, indifference, as shown by conversation with other salespeople, and an evident wish to hurry the customer off. Any of these will naturally frighten the timid customer and antagonize the determined one.

**By their talk.** The sale is sometimes spoiled by what the salesperson says, or does not say, about his merchandise. These are faults sometimes found in the willing salespeople as well as in the indifferent. Indeed, many such errors are

honestly made. The salesman thinks he is going about it in the right way. But his judgment not having been sufficiently trained in knowing what to talk about, he lets the sale slip through his fingers. Salespeople may talk too much. If we are enthuſiſatic about our merchandise and eager to help the undecided customer to make up her mind, we may not give her enough time to think things out for herself because we are talking all the time. In this way we are liable to give her the idea that we are making the decision and not she.

For people who are inclined to talk too much, it is a good thing to practice repression and silence. This can be done by a definite act of the will. They say to themselves at the beginning of the sale, "Now I will not talk too much!" Such a rule, of course, will not do for those who talk little. But it is very effective for the people to whom talking is easy.

On the other hand, some salespeople fail because they do not talk enough. Experts warn us against failing to talk up our merchandise enough. "You must not stop with merely bringing out garments and suggesting that they might please the customer. You must point out the lines, the workmanship, the lining, etc. These are things which help the customer to make up her mind."

**By showing too much.** It is possible to keep on bringing out goods from shelves, boxes, and racks, after the point has been reached when we should stop showing. The customer may have seen enough; and more will tire her. She may have nearly made up her mind and she does not need to be shown any more. At this point the sale is often lost because the salesperson keeps on bringing out more and more materials. Sometimes, also, the sale is lost because the salesperson does not try on enough garments. "Some girls just stand and hold the coat or suit without even asking their customer to try it on. You have to do that the minute you see the customer is a bit interested.



It takes only a moment, and most people are willing to try it on when you ask them politely. Sometimes this is all that is needed to make a woman decide — just to see herself in it before a mirror.”

**Alterations.** The garment sale is often lost because the salesperson forgets to mention the fact that slight alterations can be made. Instead of assuring the customer that all such points can be easily altered to please her, the salesperson's attitude is either complete indifference or something like sulkiness because the customer is hard to please.

**Not learning from experience.** An assistant buyer points out one way of improving one's self when handling the undecided customer. She advises the salesperson who has lost a sale because she could not induce the customer to decide, to go over the ground in her mind, after the sale is over, and ask herself how she might have handled it differently and succeeded instead of failed. She urges her to criticize her own method sharply, and if she can see just how she lost the chance of settling the matter, to resolve never again to lose a sale in such a way. This is what is meant by learning from experience. Watch your mistakes and never make the same one twice!

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What are the three possible situations which face the salesperson after all the goods have been shown and the talking points given?
2. How can you tell when to begin to close the sale?
3. What is meant by *focusing* the customer's attention? How can this be done?
4. How can the salesperson decide which of four or five articles the customer prefers?
5. Is it ever advisable for the salesperson to leave the customer alone for a few moments? When? Why? In all departments?
6. Should the salesperson ever offer advice? When? Why?
7. How does “playing a favorite” help in closing the sale?

8. In selecting selling points with which to close the sale, what two things should be considered?
9. Discuss briefly the place that trying-on and demonstrating have in the closing of the sale.
10. Have you ever seen salespeople "fall down" in closing the sale? Give cases.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### GOOD HUMOR WHEN THE CUSTOMER DOES NOT BUY

#### SECTION I. THE LONG VIEW

WHEN inexperienced salespeople try hard to make a sale, and the customer for one reason or another does not buy, they are likely to call their effort a failure. It is natural that they should feel disappointed, but it is unfortunate, because disappointment is likely to keep them from being cheerful and friendly. Often they speak shortly because they are angry at themselves, but the customer feels that they are irritated at her and is inclined to become irritated herself.

Experienced salespeople are more philosophical. They soon learn that it is impossible to make a sale to every customer, and that if properly handled the customer who does not buy to-day may very well return and buy to-morrow, when she has made up her mind more definitely about what she wants. It is this *long view* of selling which counts, where failure is not taken too hard, and where it is realized that the customer is not displeased or irritated and holds nothing against the salesman or the store. These experienced people build for to-morrow's trade as well as for to-day's, and so act that the customer is put into a proper frame of mind for returning on some other occasion.

The man with the long view says: "I tell myself that the trade of the moment is not the biggest thing. I want to build up a following. So I keep my eye on future trade." A saleswoman of experience says: "The looker of to-day is the buyer of to-morrow. So I am just as nice to the lookers as to the buyers." These people use a number of methods for showing good humor when the customer does not buy.

## SECTION 2. METHODS OF SHOWING GOOD HUMOR

**The proper feeling.** It is important that we should not only *appear* to be good-humored, but should actually *feel* all right about the matter in our hearts. We can prevent ourselves from feeling badly over not having made a sale if we look at it in any one of several ways. (1) We think of the good reasons that the customer may have for not buying to-day. (2) We also remember the number of times we ourselves have looked in several stores before deciding. (3) Let us consider how many sales we probably get in the week which were not begun by us, but by some other salesperson who showed the goods to the customer while she was still in the "looking" stage. (4) We may work out a percentage of the number of sales made to the number of customers waited upon, and notice how the percentage runs pretty close each week unless there is some special sale on. (5) We can remember that we have done our best and that it is not such a tragedy that we did not make this one sale. "I say to myself, 'I am not going to get fired, nor will the store close its doors, just because I did n't sell this customer something.'" In the house-furnishings department one experienced saleswoman says: "We don't expect to sell an article to a woman the first time she sees it. She looks and asks questions about how it works and goes home to talk it over, so there is no sense in getting angry because every conversation does n't make a sale."

**How to show good nature.** When you find that the customer is not going to buy, do not look glum or downhearted. Do not be snippy and do not begin at once to put things away as if you had lost interest in the customer. This is the time when it is advisable to do your best to show an unusual amount of good nature.

On all occasions express your good feeling by some sort of request to come in again. Such expressions as, "I am very sorry we have n't exactly what you want, but I have



been very glad to show you what we have and hope you will come again," should be used invariably. No set phrase should be repeated. The only thing necessary is to show the customer that you are feeling all right about it and are glad to have had the opportunity to show her something. Show that you appreciate her being in the store, that you have been glad to show her the goods, that you do not begrudge her the time spent, and that it will be a pleasure to help another day. Promise better luck the next time, express the hope that what she wants will soon come in, and ask whether you shall let her know.

If the customer is dissatisfied and talks of getting a better assortment at another store, salespeople must be particularly careful not to show resentment. We gain a great deal by agreeing, cordially, "Certainly, madam, that will probably be wisest. Look through the other stores, and if you don't find what you want, come back and I will give you this material if it is here." The customer is much more likely to return if handled in this way than if resentment has been shown.

It is often possible to "tie a string" to the departing customer who has only looked, by handing her a new catalogue, or some attractive advertising matter about the goods she has been looking at. Some salespeople give the customer their cards or write their names on tags pinned to samples. Others make notes about what the customer wants, and telephone her later, when the goods come in.

### SECTION 3. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS BY THE SALESPEOPLE

"I do not leave or turn away too quickly. I bid them a cheerful good-day and ask them to call again. Sometimes I give my name and card and tell them that if they inquire for me I shall be glad to attend to them personally."

"Tell the customer that it is no trouble to show the goods. Even if she turns away without saying anything,

follow her up and say, 'I am sorry we don't have just what you want, but come in any time and let us show you what we have. We are glad to do that.' "

"I notice that too many salespeople say nothing, or say a very glum 'You're welcome,' when customers leave without buying."

"Tell her what she wants may be in later, and may be even better for her than what she has been looking at."

"I suggest her taking samples home and tell her that she can either call me or send the order in the mail."

"I ask her to come in again when she has more time to look, and offer her my services."

"A customer often apologizes for taking up time and not buying. In that case I reply that it is no trouble to display the goods, because it is interesting. Otherwise it is well to say that one is sorry not to have just what is wanted and, if possible, it is well to mention new goods that are expected in."

"I am careful not to show in any manner that I am disappointed or resentful. I continue to smile, and if she wants samples I get them for her as cheerfully as if she had made a large purchase. I assure her that it will always be a pleasure for me to show her goods."

"I always think to myself, 'If we treat them right, we'll get them again,' so I smile and say, 'I'm sorry we have n't what you want. We are getting in new goods all the time, so if you can come in again soon, perhaps I'll have something good.' "

"The fact that a customer does not buy is never conducive to good humor, but it would be folly to get angry. The better class of salesmen, however, and particularly the old, experienced ones, will always hold a piece in reserve, perhaps a little nicer, or a little cheaper, and spring it when all seems lost. This very often turns the trick."

"After you've been willing to take a lot of pains with a customer, you might as well finish it up right. There's

no need of changing just because she does n't buy. Be nice just on general principles, for your own satisfaction."

"I can really feel good-humored because I always say to myself that it is n't just what she wants or she would buy."

"In our department — jewelry — they do a lot of 'shopping' and we are accustomed to it, and we don't mind if they don't buy. Many of them say they want to think it over, and they do. Why, I showed a girl a forty-five-dollar pin several times, and she came back a few weeks later and bought it. Always tell them it's all right to look, and smile if they thank you."

"If a customer is n't satisfied, I make her feel that the merchandise is right even if it is not what she wanted. I say 'Good-bye' and tell her we'll be glad to serve her again. If a sale is coming along, I tell her about it, and ask her to leave her telephone number so that I can call her. I sometimes say, 'If there is a sale on specials, I'll call you up or write you. This gives her a chance to get away and she generally brightens up.'"

"I tell her I am sorry, and to come back again when she may find what she wants. I once had a customer who was very hard to fit, and there was n't a dress in the department that fitted her. I told her I was going to New York the next week and would be glad to bring some dresses back for her. She said all right, and when I brought them back and telephoned her to come in to see them, she bought five."

"I smile and try to make some casual remark about the weather or some other commonplace subject so that her refusal of our goods won't be her last impression of the department."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why is it that salespeople often lose their interest in a sale when they see that the customer will not buy? (Give the causes.)
2. State seven methods of showing good humor.

3. Why is it necessary to feel good humor if you wish to show it?
4. Read over the suggestions in section 3 and make a list of all the different ideas.
5. What methods of showing good humor do you use yourself when the customer does not buy?



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### WHEN THE SALE IS OVER

#### SECTION I. WHAT TO SAY

If the customer decides not to purchase, the salesperson maintains a pleasant manner, and allows her to leave, in the fashion described in the preceding chapter. But it is equally important that, if the customer decides to buy, the salesperson should not allow her interest and courtesy to diminish as soon as the customer has made her decision. There are certain routine things to take care of, such as getting the proper address, seeing that the parcel either is made ready for the customer to take or that it is sent expeditiously upon its way to the delivery department. And in seeing to these, it is particularly important to make sure that the customer is really satisfied, is put in a pleasant frame of mind as she leaves, and is invited to return.

**Be certain that the customer is satisfied.** If there has been any trouble in finding out just what the customer wanted, or any uncertainty in her mind as to the wisdom of taking what she has finally selected, then we should ask her if she is sure. "Now you are quite convinced that this is what you ought to have? For if you are not, let me show you more goods or let us go once more over those we have looked at. I want you to be entirely satisfied." This may, in some cases, prolong the sale, but usually it helps the customer to make up her mind definitely and finally.

**Better no sale than a return.** It is not fair always to blame the customer for returning merchandise after the salesperson has considered it sold, for too often the fault lies with the salesperson rather than with the customer. Each return for exchange, credit, or refund represents so

much of a loss to the store that it is the duty of every member of the selling force to learn how to make each sale as final as possible. Many of the best salespeople realize very clearly the loss involved in selling goods only to have them brought back, and they feel that they would rather lose the sale, even after a good deal of time and trouble has been taken, than to sell to a customer who will be dissatisfied with the merchandise after she gets it home. Not only does the machinery of exchange cost the store money, so that several dozen exchanges in a day may amount to considerable expense, but there is the customer's feeling in the matter to be reckoned with. Even though the return is a whim with her, for which she might justly be somewhat blamed, she is subjected to some inconvenience and trouble in order to see it through, and is likely to feel a little irritation. This feeling is stronger when she thinks that the salesperson has been at fault in selling her something she does not want. So, because it is of great importance to the store that the customer should not feel dissatisfied, each salesperson must realize the necessity of selling to her only if there is practical certainty that she will be satisfied finally with her purchase. Otherwise it is very much wiser to let the sale go.

**Positive suggestion.** We are also advised by salespeople that it is very important in cases where it has been hard to decide, to give some final word of praise concerning the selection. Some say, "I am sure you have made a wise choice" — "I am certain you will like the blue better than you would have liked the brown" — "I know you are going to get a great deal of satisfaction out of that" — "Let me know the next time you come in whether we have not made a fine choice" — "Your husband will certainly be pleased with your selection" — "I am sure your husband will think you look charming in that" — "Your neighbors are certainly going to be envious of that garment."

In each of these comments you will notice that the salesperson has stated *positively* that the customer *will be satisfied* with her purchase. This helps to send her away satisfied, and very possibly her own enthusiasm for the selection leads her friends to admire it, whereas if she is in doubt about it herself, her friends may not express enthusiastic admiration.

Positive suggestion by people in whom we have confidence is the most important method of developing our liking for any object. The salesperson can use this fact to excellent advantage after the sale has been closed.

**“Thank you very much!”** It hardly needs to be mentioned that before we leave the customer, or before she leaves us, we should thank her cordially for the opportunity to wait upon her and ask her to come again. It is better to do this even in a perfunctory manner than not to do it at all, but the chief advantage of doing it is assured if the person who does it speaks cordially and sincerely. To the customer it acts as a pleasant conclusion to a pleasant transaction, and to the salesperson it results in a satisfied customer who will return to the store and to her again. Particularly important is it that we should express our good will when the customer has not bought, for on such an occasion we are frequently disappointed and the customer feels embarrassed, thus making it doubly necessary to let her know we have been glad to wait upon her.

**Suggesting other merchandise.** It is important in closing the sale, except where the customer is much hurried, to suggest other articles which she may wish to buy. These may be related goods, used in connection with what has been bought, or they may be advertised merchandise, specials, or reduced stock in our own department. Such suggestive selling is encouraged by the management of all stores. It makes more business, it helps the customer to recall something she ought to buy in connection with her purchase, and it impresses her with a sense that she is

being looked after pleasantly when she shops in our store. It is therefore important to ask, "Is there anything else in which I can interest you? We have a special sale this week in thread." In this way the woman who buys dress goods or silks may be started toward the trimming department, the pattern department, or the notions. When she buys dress goods for a skirt, other goods for a coat may be shown her, as well as the silk that will be needed to line it. In the stationery department a pound of paper will naturally suggest envelopes, pens, or sealing wax. At the toilet goods counter, as she waits for the soap to be wrapped, some perfume or powder may be sold to her. Men who buy collars are attracted to the newest line of garters or a special sale of neckties. In some rug departments the salesmen have an interest in selling vacuum cleaners; often they can also turn a customer over to a furniture salesman at the close of the rug sale. The people who sell shoes can always suggest rubbers on a rainy day. Here, too, the saleswoman can mention a new line of satin slippers to the young customer who looks as though she danced, or may direct the athletic young woman to the counter where woollen sports hose are sold. These methods of suggestive selling will not always work at the time, but we are told that they pay in the long run because the customer remembers our suggestions — she remembers not only the kindly and helpful interest which prompted them, but also the actual goods mentioned. If she has no time now to hunt up what has been recommended, she may return for it in a day or two.

Have some certain article in your stock in mind each day, and when opportunity presents itself, such as a brief delay in return of change, speak pleasantly about it to the customer, or possibly bring it forward and show it without seeming to offer it for sale at the moment.



## SECTION 2. CONCLUSION

THE purpose of this book has been to show that customers are the centers of the selling transaction. They enter the store with certain problems to solve and in the solution of these they have certain standards by which to judge the value of the goods. The duty of the firm is to provide the merchandise and the business of the salesperson is to put it before customers so that they can reach a satisfactory decision.

One of the most significant considerations in connection with the selling transaction lies in the fact that the feeling of the salesperson toward customers has a tremendous influence upon their decisions. It has been proved from many angles that courtesy and intelligent interest, which develop confidence in customers, are strong factors; almost as strong as the quality of the merchandise itself, and frequently even stronger. It is therefore important that salespeople should make the atmosphere of the store of such a nature that customers may be put into the proper frame of mind to make wise and happy selection.

In giving the assistance necessary, the salesperson is led to size-up customers so that he may learn by indirect as well as by direct means all he can about their problems and standards. In doing this, he endeavors to discover the chief characteristics of customers, and also to determine their wishes with regard to specific articles of merchandise. In the solution of these problems many very interesting methods have been worked out by expert salespeople.

As the sale is going on, talking points have to be developed, the kind of merchandise that the customer wants has to be determined, and the goods that will satisfy these wants must be shown. In addition the salesperson must stand ready to give information upon all the uses to which the goods are to be put. This can be done by collecting

talking points. Finally, after selection has been made and the sale has been completed, the salesperson must remember that satisfaction is partly a matter of feeling, and that positive suggestions which will reassure customers concerning the wisdom of their selections should be made. In other words, not only should the goods be delivered, but the customers' judgment should be honestly commended, and their feeling of satisfaction should be strengthened as much as possible.

However important are the financial interest of the firm itself, and the welfare and progress of the selling staff, the most vital consideration in the activities of both of these is the pleasing of the customer, so that those who purchase to-day may continue to be regular and satisfied patrons.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. How can salespeople spoil the impression made, *after* the customer has decided to buy?
2. How can you be certain the customer is satisfied?
3. Is it ever the salesperson's fault when goods are returned? Explain.
4. What is meant by "positive suggestion"? Give examples from your experience.
5. What phrases should *always* be used at the close of the sale? Why?
6. What do salespeople mean by "suggestive selling"? Give three illustrations from your experience.
7. What considerations influence many customers more strongly than the values they get in merchandise?
8. What is the most important thing emphasized in this book, as brought out in the summary?

THE END

## INDEX





## INDEX

*(All references to merchandise will be found in a separate index following this)*

- Accuracy in the sale, 13-15.
- Actions, sizing-up C.<sup>1</sup> by, 30, 38-39.
- Adaptation in treatment of C., 49-51.
- Advertisements, reading the store's as an aid in learning mdse., 155.
- Allowances, making, for the trying C., 114-15.
- Appearance, as a talking point, 243.
- Appearances, need of keeping up, as a "value" in buying, 6.
- Argument unwise in dealing with trying C., 113-14; between two Cs. shopping together, 133-36.
- Asking questions of others as an aid in learning mdse., 151-54.
- Asking questions to ascertain C.'s need. *See* Questions asked.
- Atmosphere, pleasant, needed in sale, 11-13, 173-79; needed in opening sale, 173-74; factors in creating it, 174-78; promptness, 174-75; pleasant manner, 175-76; good judgment, 177-78; secured by proper sizing-up, 178-79.
- Bargain-hunter, 67, 76, 88-89.
- Beauty, as a value sought for, 5.
- Becomingness as a talking point, 244.
- Books as aids in learning mdse., 156.
- Business-like C., 77.
- Buyer as a source of help in learning mdse., 153-54.
- Calming actions, in dealing with trying C., 112-13.
- Care of stock. *See* Stock-keeping.
- Closing sale, 290-304; when to begin, 290-91; focusing C.'s attention, 291-97; stop showing, 292; begin to lay aside, 292; concentrate on a few, 292-93; importance of inspiring C.'s confidence, 293; offering advice, 294; repeat selling points, 294; play a favorite, 294; refute objections, 295; demonstrate or try on, 295; get opinion of others, 296; illustrations, 297-301; mistakes made, 301-03.
- Closing-time, neglecting C. at, 103.
- Clothes, sizing-up C. by, 29-37.
- Color, questions about, 184-85.
- Comfort, as a value sought for, 5; as a talking point, 244.
- Confidence inspired in C. by salesperson, how to obtain, 11-12; secured by S.P.'s knowledge of stock, 142; needed in closing sale, 293.
- Confidence of S.P. in himself, 143-44.
- Conversation, sizing-up C.'s, 30, 39-42, 191-92.
- Courtesy, 11-12; importance of, 90; how to show, 90-91; in actions, 91-93; promptness, 92; adapt manner to C.'s, 92. *See also* Intelligent interest.
- Cranky C., how to deal with. *See* Patience.
- Customer, handling the, different methods needed, 46-51; how to adapt these to C., 49-50; Golden Rule applied, 50-51.
- importance of, in sale, 1-2.
- in a hurry, if two are present, 129; speed sale by asking questions, 181-82.
- sizing-up the — the sizing-up process, 19-27; how to size-up, 28, 29, 45; when to, 29, 45; purpose of sizing-up, 19-21, 45; information thus secured as to C.'s characteristics, 19-20; as to sale, 20; different kinds of sizing-up needed, 21; advantages and dangers of the process, 21-24; regarded as game, 22-23; identify qualities, not "types," 24-26, 45-46; incorrect sizing-up, 23, 83-89; failure to size-up at all, 83-85; cut-and-dried sizing-up, 85-86; misjudging qualities, 86-89; sizing-up important in creating pleasant atmosphere, 178-79; what points are noted in sizing-up — walk, 29, 30-31; clothes, 29, 31-37; expression, 30, 37-38; voice, 30; conversation, 30, 39-42; actions, 30, 38-39; taste, 32-

- 37, 39-40; age, 42; physical characteristics, 42.  
 values sought by, 5-6; how satisfied, 6-10.  
 Customer's actions sized-up, 30, 38-39.  
   clothes sized-up, 29, 31-37.  
   conversation sized-up, 30, 39-42.  
   expression sized-up, 30, 37-38.  
   interest, securing the. *See* Interest, customer's.  
   need analyzed, 2-6; three stages, 3-4; defined (ascertained), 94, 180-96; by asking questions, 180-90; not too many, 181-82; what kind, 182-85; about use for article, 182-83; not about size, 183-84; nor price, 184; about color, 184-85; about materials, 185; illustrations from various departments, 186-90; by showing goods, 191-96; purpose of showing, 191; notice C.'s expression as goods are shown, 191-93; her remarks, 192; act on basis of these, 192-93; illustrations, 193-96.  
   problem. *See* Customer's need.  
   qualities — decided, 30, 53-57; undecided, 58-61; silent, 62-65; looker, 30, 65-67; nervous, 31; pleasant, 24, 40, 55, 72-75; haughty, 48-49; gushing, 40-41; refined, 39-40; knowing goods, 41, 42, 75; friendly, 72-73; foreign, 68-71; well-bred, 73-75; economical, 75-77; tired, 46-47; sincere, 40-41; faddy, 78-79; cranky (*see* Patience).  
   questions, paying attention to, 98, 225, 226.  
   taste, 32-37, 39-40.  
   voice, 30.  
   walk (carriage), 29, 30-31.  
 Customers, handling two at once. *See* Handling two customers.  
 Cut-and-dried sizing-up, 85-86.  
 Decided customer — characteristics, 53-56; how to handle, 56-57.  
 Defining C.'s needs. *See* Customer's needs.  
 Disagreeable C., 79-81.  
 Discourtesy to C., 100-08; in manner, 100-01; in action, 102-05; specific discourtesies, 106-08.  
 Discussing the merchandise. *See* Information about goods, and Talking points.  
 Displaying goods. *See* Showing goods.  
 Durability, as a value sought for, 5; as a talking point, 244.  
 Economical C., 75-77.  
 Efficiency in the sale, 13-15.  
 End of the sale. *See* Sale, after closing.  
 Experience as an aid in knowing merchandise, 149-50.  
 Expert buyer, 75.  
 Faces, remembering. *See* Remembering names and faces.  
 Faddy C., 78-79.  
 Failures and mistakes of salespeople. *See* Falling down.  
 Falling down — in sizing-up C., 23-24, 83-89; in handling C., 46, 83-89; in showing interest and courtesy, 100-08; in locating stock quickly, 166; in describing goods, 200; in showing goods, 225-29, 231; in closing sale, 301-03.  
 Fashion, as a value sought for, 5; as a talking point, 243.  
 Feeling fit, as means of keeping the temper, 112.  
 Feelings, place of, in selling, 11-13; pleasant atmosphere necessary in sale, 173-78.  
 Finding goods quickly, 166.  
 Finding out what the C. wants, as showing intelligent interest, 94. *See also* Customer's needs.  
 Firm, duty of, in connection with efficient selling, 15-16.  
 Foreign C., characteristics, 68-69; how handled, 69-71.  
 Friendly C., 72-73.

Friends shopping together, how to handle, 130-41.

Funny side, seeing the, in dealing with trying C., 113.

Game, viewing the sizing-up process as a, 22; keeping your temper as a, 114.

Golden Rule, how to apply in handling C., 50-51.

Good humor when C. does not buy, 305-10; take the long view, 305; how to show good humor, 306-07; suggestions from salespeople, 307-10.

Good temper in dealing with trying C., 109-16. *See also* Good humor.

Goods. *See* Merchandise.

Goods, showing. *See* Showing goods.

Grouchy C., 79, 109-16.

Group discourtesy, 104-05.

Handling two Cs. at once, when the two are not shopping together, 126-30; the problem, 126; call another salesperson, 126-27; if all are busy, 127-28; differences in handling as required in different depts., 128; how to divide the attention between the two, 128-29; if one sale can be put through quickly, 129; when the two are shopping together, 130-41; the problem, 130-31; how to handle it, 131-41; when they differ, 133-36; mother and daughter, 136-39; husband and wife, 139-41.

Husband and wife shopping together, 139-41.

Indifference and discourtesy, how shown, 100-08; in manner, 100-01; in action, 102-05.

Information given to C. about goods, 9, 94. *See also* Talking points.

Intelligent interest shown by salesperson as part of courtesy, 93-98; in showing goods, 93; in finding out what the C. wants, 94; in talking about goods, 94; in knowing the goods, 94-95; in suggesting other goods, 95. *See also* Courtesy.

Interest, C.'s, in what is shown, 37; how to secure it, 197-208; by effort to please, 197; by ascertaining C.'s need, 197-98; by getting

goods quickly, 198; by enthusiasm, 198-99; by using variety in language, 199-201; by methods of showing, 201-02; how to judge of C.'s interest, 202-04; by her comments, 202-03; by her expression, 203; by her actions and manner, 203-04; illustrations from depts., 204-06.

Justifying prices, mdse. knowledge as an aid in, 145-46.

Keeping stock. *See* Stock-keeping.

Laziness in showing goods or attending to C., 103-04, 106-07.

Learning your mdse. *See* Merchandise, learning to know.

Looker — characteristics, 65-66; how handled, 66-67.

Magazines, as source of mdse. information, 155.

Manufacturing methods, learning to know, 146-47.

Materials, questions about, to ascertain C.'s need, 185.

Memorizing names and faces. *See* Remembering names and faces.

Memory book as aid in recalling names and faces, 121.

Merchandise, care of. *See* Stock-keeping.

Merchandise, how to show, how much to show, etc. *See* Showing goods.

Merchandise, learning to know, 142-56; as a means of showing interest and courtesy, 94-95; advantages, 142-44; incentives to, 144-45; what mdse. knowledge consists of, 145-49; more than mere stock-location, 145; aid in justifying prices, 145-46; knowing raw materials, 146; mfg. methods, 146-47; knowing values, 147; how to start learning, 149-56; by experience, 149-50; by handling goods, 150-51; watching others, 151; asking others, 51-52; from customers, 152-53; from salesmen, 153; from stock head, 153; from buyer, 153-54; from mfr's. printed matter, 154; trade journals, 154-55; magazines, 155; store advts., 155; newspapers, 156; books, 156; as aid in securing C.'s interest, 198-



- 201; as a basis of selling talk, 244-45.
- Misrepresentation of merchandise, 9-10.
- Mistakes of salesperson. *See* Falling down.
- Mother and daughter shopping together, 136-39.
- Names, remembering. *See* Remembering names and faces.
- Need, C.'s. *See* Customer's need.
- Objections — can be met through knowing mdse., 143; how to meet, 261-89; determine whether sincere, 261; whether C. is right or wrong, 261-63; if objection is final and sale lost, 263.
- “Same thing cheaper elsewhere,” 264-69.
- “More than I want to pay,” 269-73.
- “I want to think it over,” 273-74.
- “Not exactly what I want,” 275-78.
- “I want my husband to see it,” 278-80.
- “I wanted something better,” 280-82.
- “I have n't enough money with me,” 282-83.
- “I will wait till it is marked down,” 283-85.
- “I am looking for a friend,” 285-86.
- “I want to look around before buying,” 286-88.
- Opening sale, 173-79; purpose, 173-74; atmosphere, 174; promptness, 174-75; pleasant manner, 175; and greeting, 175-78; sizing-up, 178-79.
- Patience in dealing with trying C., 109-16; the right attitude, 110-11; for the good of the business, 111-12; feeling fit, 112; actions that calm, 112-13; seeing the funny side, 113; don't argue, 113-14; look at it as a game, 114; making allowances, 114-15; showing goods, 115; self-respect, 115-16.
- Paying attention to C.'s questions and comments, 98, 225, 226.
- Pleasant feeling in the sale, 11-13.
- Practical convenience as a talking point, 244.
- Price — of goods to show, judged by C.'s clothes, 33-34; asking questions about, 184; as a talking point, 244; when and how to mention, 253-60; depends on character of C., 253; conditions regulating direct and indirect mention, 254-56; illustrations, 256-60.
- Prices, justifying, made possible through knowing goods, 145-46.
- Printed matter as an aid in learning mdse., 154-56.
- Purpose or problem, customer's. *See* Customer's need.
- Purpose or use of mdse. asked, 182-83.
- Quality, as a value sought for, 5; as a talking point, 243.
- Quarreling among salespeople, 102.
- Questions asked in order to ascertain C.'s need, 180-90; use questions first, 180-81; not too many, 181-82; what kind, 182-85; about use of article, 182-83; not about size, 183-84; nor price, 184; about color, 184-85; about materials, 185.
- Questions, C.'s. *See* Customer's questions.
- Raw materials, learning to know, 146.
- Remembering names and faces, 117-25; advantages of, 117-18; which C. to remember, 118-19; how to memorize names, 119-22; memory books, 121; difficult cases, 122-23.
- Right attitude in dealing with trying C., 110-11.
- Sale, analysis of, 2-17; C. of most importance in, 1; steps in, 8; opening the sale (*see* Opening the sale); closing (*see* Closing the sale).
- Sale, after closing the, what to do, 311-16; is C. satisfied, 311; how to lessen returns, 311-13; suggest other goods, 313.
- Sales, differences and likenesses in, 2.
- Salesperson's function, 1.
- Satisfying C.'s need. *See* Customer's need.
- Self-respect retained in dealing with trying C., 115-16.
- Selling, retail and other types con-



- trasted, 4-5; C. is center of the art of, 1.
- Selling talk. *See* Talking points.
- Sentiment as a talking point, 244.
- Serviceability as a talking point, 244.
- Showing goods — part of salesperson's duty, 7, 9; as indicating intelligent interest, 93-94; done indifferently, 103-04; as a means of keeping your temper, 115; as an aid in ascertaining C.'s need, 191-96; purpose of showing, 191; notice C.'s expression, 191-93; and her comments, 192; act on these, 192-93; illustrations, 193-96; methods of, 207-29; order of showing, 207; what and how to show in ready-to-wear, 208-09; where to show garments, 209-11; in the hand, 209; at the counter, 209-10; trying on, 210-11; rules from various depts., 212-25; incorrect methods, 225-29; how much to show at once, 230-42; depends on observed character of C., 230; discrimination needed, 231; rules as to how much to show, 231-33; when to stop, 234-35; illustrations, 235-42.
- Showy C., 77-79.
- Silent C., 62-65.
- Size, questions about, 183-84.
- Sizing-up. *See* Customer, sizing-up the.
- Speed in the sale, 13-15; if C. is hurried, ask questions, 181-82; obtained if salesperson knows stock, 143; if she finds stock quickly, 166-67.
- Spender, how to handle, 77-78.
- Stingy C., 75-76.
- Stock-keeping, properly done, 157-65; importance of, 157; bad effects of neglect, 157-59; neglect loses sales, 157; makes bad impression on C., 157; and on salespeople, 158; does damage to mdse., 158-59; rules for doing properly, 159-60; specified for various depts., 160-65.
- Stock-location, 166-72; reasons for slowness in finding goods, 166-67; systematic arrangement needed, 167; locations must be memorized, 167-68; stock must be handled, 168-69; must be put back promptly, 169; concentration helpful in hunting, 170-71; in case of delay, keep C. busy, 171.
- Stocks must be complete, 15; and well-located, 15-16.
- Style. *See* Fashion.
- Suggestive selling, 95, 313.
- Superior C., 79.
- Suspicious C., 80.
- Talkative C., 80-81.
- Talking about the mdse. *See* Information, and Talking points.
- Talking points — as related to values sought, 5-6; learned through knowing mdse., 147; what t.p. are, 243-52; their importance, 243; enumerated, 243-44; dependent on mdse. knowledge, 244-45; vary with different goods, 245-46; adapted to individual C., 246-47; how to state them, 247-48; illustrations, 248-52.
- Taste, sizing-up C.'s, 32-37, 39-40.
- Temper, keeping it when the C. is cranky, 109-16; or does not buy, 305-10.
- Thinking, clear, needed in sale, 8.
- Training selling force, duty of firm, 16.
- Truth about mdse. *See* Misrepresentation of mdse.
- Trying on garments, how to do it, 210-11.
- "Types" of C. not to be determined, so much as their qualities, 24-26.
- Undecided C., 58-61.
- Unreasonable C., 80.
- Vain C., 78.
- Values sought by C., 5-6; how satisfied, 6-10; learned by salesperson through knowing mdse., 147. *See also* Customer's need, and Talking points.
- Voice, customer's, 30, 39-40.
- Volume of business done in store, 1.
- Well-bred C., 73-75.
- Wife and husband shopping together, 139-41.



## INDEX TO MERCHANDISE

Art needlework, 219.

Babies' clothes. *See* Infants' wear.

Bathrobes and negligees, 257.

Bedding and springs, 223-24, 266.

Books, 54, 235.

Boys' clothing, 105, 161-62, 205-06,  
235-36, 251, 259.

Cameras, 96-97.

Carpets and rugs, 97, 185, 195-96,  
200, 220-22, 258, 314.

Children's clothes, 63, 190.

China and lamps, 150-51, 164-65,  
189, 194, 224-25, 247, 248.

Coats. *See* Men's clothing, and Women's coats, suits and dresses.

Corsets, 36, 183, 188, 194, 236.

Dress goods, 67, 97, 146, 147, 216-17,  
255-56, 257, 269, 272, 277-78,  
295, 314.

Electrical goods, 222-23.

Embroideries, 144.

Fancy goods. *See* Art needlework.

Frames. *See* Pictures and frames.

Furniture, 105-06, 157, 164, 185, 186,  
223, 228, 231, 258, 301, 314.

Furs, 163, 188, 236.

Gloves, 34, 152-53, 163, 183, 195,  
215, 237, 250.

Handkerchiefs, 237, 256.

Hosiery, 148, 155, 163, 195, 237, 256,  
314.

House furnishings, 36, 96, 106, 138,  
155, 186, 259.

Household goods in general, 147, 155.

Infants' wear, 46-49.

Jewelry, 187, 309.

Laces, 151, 152, 155.

Lamps. *See* China and lamps.

Leather goods, 233, 265.

Linens, 105, 139, 155, 187, 217-18,  
228-29, 249.

Linings, 164.

Luggage, 200, 272-73.

Mattresses. *See* Bedding.

Men's clothing, 6-7, 139-40, 161-62,  
176, 189, 195, 238, 251, 254,  
255, 291, 300.

furnishings, 3, 95, 189, 216,  
238-39, 259-60, 314.  
hats, 215-16.

Millinery. *See* Women's hats.

Misses' clothes, 161.

Neckwear (women's), 54, 144, 152,  
237, 250.

Notions, 54, 218, 314.

Office supplies, 239.

Patterns, 314.

Perfumes. *See* Toilet goods

Petticoats, 298.

Photographic supplies. *See* Cameras.

Pictures and frames, 54, 165, 182,  
185, 188-89, 224, 239, 257, 258,  
300-01.

Ranges and stoves, 128, 222.

Ready-to-wear in general, 183, 208-  
09, 244-45, 284.

Ribbons, 105, 163-64, 169, 195, 239-  
40, 255-56.

Rugs. *See* Carpets and rugs.

Sewing machines, 139.

Shoes, 3, 9-10, 35, 64, 166, 170, 183,  
186, 215, 250, 258, 314.

Silks, 4, 85, 187, 194, 216-17, 255-56,  
258, 259, 269, 272, 295, 314.

Silverware, 134, 219-20, 269.

Skirts. *See* Women's coats, suits and dresses.

Sporting goods, 34-35, 187, 200.

Stationery, 219, 314.

Stockings. *See* Hosiery.

Sweaters, 162, 241.

Talking machines, 105, 224, 231, 252.

Toilet goods, 35, 138, 218, 314.

Toys, 259, 268.

Trimmings, 218.

Trunks. *See* Luggage.

Umbrellas, 187, 219, 259.

Underwear, knit, 190, 215, 257; mus-  
lin, 36, 214.

Upholstery, 139, 186, 220, 249, 257-  
58.

Veilings, 107.

Waists, 50, 185, 188, 201, 225, 241-  
42, 251, 299-300.

Watches, 219.

Women's coats, suits and dresses, 63-  
64, 134, 157, 160-61, 168,  
170, 180, 184, 185, 188,  
192, 193-94, 204-05, 206,  
208-11, 212-14, 225, 227-  
28, 240-41, 246, 255, 265,  
266, 267, 270, 276, 277,  
295, 297, 298, 299, 309.  
hats, 3-4, 36, 98, 162-63,  
189, 201, 205, 211, 235,  
237-38, 281, 291, 294.





# HOW TO SELL AT RETAIL

By W. W. Charters

Here is a book on salesmanship that tells, not how successful selling **should** be done, but how it **is** done.

Based on a careful analysis of the technique and selling experiences of 300 of the most efficient salesmen in a large American city, it gives only the proven and practical ideas that have actually demonstrated their effectiveness.

**HOW TO SELL AT RETAIL** is a compendium of methods used by successful salespeople.

It shows just how every detail of a sales transaction can be most efficiently handled, and does it so clearly and forcibly that its purchase will be an unlimitedly profitable investment for every retail salesman and every employer of retail salesmen.

The complete table of contents  
is given on the back wrapper

**HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY**



3 9999 08817 298 4

\$3.00

## WRITING AN ADVERTISEMENT

By S. Roland Hall

The only book to deal exclusively and thoroughly with the vital subject of copy. In stimulating, non-technical fashion, the author shows just how to write advertising that pays.

"A readable, informative, stimulating book, written familiarly by a man who has won his spurs many times, in different fields of strife, as a writer of resultful advertising. Illustrated with many examples of real advertisements. A book on a subject on which few have written so sensibly, fully and practically."  
*Printer and Publisher.*

## SALESMANSHIP

By William Maxwell

In this book twenty years of selling experience are condensed into less than two hundred and fifty pages of crisp practical advice and forceful illustration. The author is Vice-President of Thomas A. Edison, Inc., and one of the most successful managers of salesmen and of selling campaigns in the country.

"The best article on Salesmanship I have ever read." — *Mr. Respass, of Frank Seaman Co.*

## THE BUSINESS LETTER

By Ion E. Dwyer

Every branch of business correspondence is covered in this book, which shows how to write letters that are full of vigor and individuality, clear and strong in their appeal to the reader.



